

**YOUTH CULTURE AND
DISCIPLINE
AT A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

CARIN CARSTENS

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Master of Education (Policy Studies) at Stellenbosch
University.



Supervisor: Dr Azeem Badroodien

March 2013

DECLARATION

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Carin Carstens

March 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I need to thank many for their unstinting support during both the rewarding and difficult times through which this thesis has led me.

Without the Creator, nothing is possible. To Him, I give thanks for all blessings I have received, and most especially those which made this project come to fruition.

To my project leader, Dr Azeem Badroodien, I need to convey my most heartfelt gratitude for guiding me. I need to thank him also for teaching me - not only how to birth insights into words, but also how to find that unique kind of patience that is needed for growth.

Without the permission granted by the Western Cape Education Department, and those in positions of authority at Avondale High School, this study would have been impossible. The co-operation - far beyond my wildest expectations - given by the learners of Avondale is surely the most essential of all to this thesis: “thank you” are words that are too short indeed.

I express my deepest appreciation to Bernard Marchand and Peter Bresler, and to life-long friends Mossie and Ria Kruger, and Neil and Heather Malan, for their never-ending encouragement and interest.

My husband, Jannie, needs to be thanked for accommodating the growing idea. I thank Jan Paul, Janecke and Johan, my children, from the very bottom of my heart: they never allowed me to doubt.

I convey to you all my most sincere gratitude: may those who cross your paths in life be as helpful and caring.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

SSA Statistics South Africa

DoE Department of Education

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

R&B Rhythm & Blues

WCED Western Cape Education Department

ABSTRACT

Internationally, contemporary youth struggle to make sense or meaning of their lives. That is so because they live in a world where they daily witness unsolvable problems of struggling economies, poverty, HIV, and religious and national conflict, and where they are generally treated with ambivalence and a threat to the existing social order. Youth also struggle because within the public imagination they exist on the fringe of society. Giroux (2012: 2) argues that youth are given few spaces where “they can recognise themselves outside of the needs, values, and desires preferred by the marketplace” and are mostly subjected to punitive and zero tolerance approaches when they behave in unacceptable ways.

In South Africa presently, it is generally claimed that “discipline problems” amongst youth have become the most endemic problem in South African schools, with policy makers and educators daily complaining about the disciplinary problems within schools that affect how learners engage with learning. Equally, discipline as punitive coercion has been shown to be an unsuccessful educational method in dealing with youth (Porteus & Vally 1999).

With the above schooling challenge in mind, this qualitative study explored the views of thirteen young learners at Avondale High School in the Western Cape on school discipline. Via semi-structured interviews, the youth were asked about their understandings of the rules, disciplinary structures, forms of authority and order at the school, how they interpreted the role of discipline, and how they thought this would influence the futures awaiting them.

The goal of the study was to provide a multi-dimensional view of what youth regarded as discipline at one school, and to explore whether different learners adopted different meanings of ‘discipline’ according to the context of their individual lives.

I show in the study - utilising the views of Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu - that school discipline needs to be thought of as more than punishment or structures of ordering *per se* if it is to play a productive role in the functioning of schools. Along with Yang (2009: 49) I suggest that only when schools recognise that discipline has multiple meanings and (limited) roles within their daily functioning, will the emancipatory and transformative possibilities of school discipline be unlocked. For that to happen, the voices and views of youth in schools have to be taken account of, and meaningful relationships developed between learners, educators, and school management.

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CHAPTER 1

DISPOSABLE YOUTH AND ISSUES OF DISCIPLINE

I only went out for a walk...

But, going out, I found was really going in.

Muir (2011: 6)

1.1 Introduction

This thesis had its origins in a walk to the office one school morning; the purpose of which has long passed from my memory. It all started as I walked along the corridor leading to the office and passed first a dustbin and then a line of about 10 learners waiting outside the deputy headmaster's office.

I am not sure exactly what it was that piqued my interest as an educator on that particular day. Hitherto, I had accepted that there was nothing unusual about what I saw when walking past the office. After all, learners standing outside the office waiting to be reprimanded and punished were part of the everyday landscape at our school, Avondale High. It was part of a process that started with their names being called out at the preceding assembly and these learners then being told to report to the office. After assembly, they would troop off and await the disciplinary process. They would either be sent home, or spend the whole day isolated from their peers at a desk in front of the office. For what was deemed lesser offences, they would be remanded back into the care of their educators, with their punishment having been meted out.

So what made me suddenly question what was happening in front of the office on that day? Perhaps it was my whimsical questioning on my walk of certain disposed items in a dustbin that I passed on my way to the office. Was it this metaphor that stuck in my mind as I walked past the learners? Whatever it was, on that day it dawned on me that it seemed to be the same 'outcast' group of learners that desultorily stood there - week after week. Why were they there and what had led to these particular learners being identified for institutional attention? What made me even more curious, I suspect, was that although I taught very few of the learners that I passed in front of the office, that I seemed to know every one of their names.

This made me ask myself how it was that, although these learners were reprimanded or punished on a weekly basis, they continued to return to the front of the principal's office, knowing full well the severe repercussions of doing so. In my attempt to understand this, I could not accept normative assertions that most contemporary learners were obstreperous and

deeply rebellious (even anarchistic); that they generally ‘transgressed’ school rules to seek attention, deliberately challenging authority, or were acting out self-destructive streaks - which included defiance, school failure, delinquency, and risk-taking behaviour (Donovan *et al* 1988, Whalen & Kauffman 1999).

Rather, I was interested in whether there was more to the issue than met the eye. I wondered what each of the individual learners thought about the rules of the school and ‘this process’ that took place on a weekly basis. More pertinently, I asked myself what the same line of youthful transgressors in front of the same office at the same time of every week revealed about our school and, more importantly, our society.

1.2 The conceptual issue of ‘disposable’ learners: Avondale’s “Dust Bin Kids” as global and local trend

In a world beset with seemingly insurmountable problems of struggling and poverty-ridden economies, HIV, national and religious conflicts, and dilemmas associated with many who are leading sedentary lifestyles, it is perhaps unsurprising that youth currently struggle to make meaning of their lives, especially given their problematic role as both commodities and key consumers in our current vapid world of consumption. For them, a key consequence of failing to make sense of their places and roles, as Dillabough and Kennelly (2010: 11) note, is that they are then invariably “pushed off” various economic agendas and are then obliged to live unrecognised on the fringes of what is deemed “acceptable” and “desired”.

While we remind youth on a daily basis that they embody the projected dreams, desires and commitment to our society’s obligations to the future, that they symbolically represent our society’s main claim to progress and that adults are there to protect and affirm their rights, we have come to largely treat them as objects of ambivalence, and often even key threats to what is most coveted within our existing social order (Giroux, 2012: 2).

As Giroux (2012) further notes, youth have singularly become the focus of adult fascination because they not only represent how our society imagines its desired democratic self (and the future) to be, but also because as a group youth seemingly needs to be subjected to authority: subordinated, regulated, and contained if the individual freedoms and social powers associated with consumptive behaviour are to be procured and protected. In such a world, Giroux (2012: 4) suggests, the youth today is given few spaces where “they can recognise themselves outside of the needs, values, and desires preferred by the marketplace”.

Displaying behaviours stemming from this hostility towards them, the dismal conditions under which many of them live, and the chilling fear that they will not conform to what is expected of them, youth in contemporary society has increasingly been labelled as “disruptive, disordered and disturbed” (Brendtro & Du Toit, 2005: 5). Consequently, they are disciplined by adults using interventions such as verbal reprimands (with threats of consequences or loss of privileges) or outright punishments, such as exclusion or banishment. Giroux (2012) similarly emphasises that the youth is promptly subjected to a variety of psycho-pharmacological, punitive, and “Zero Tolerance” treatments when their behaviours are seen as even remotely transgressive. Brendtro & Du Toit (2005: 3-7) summarise this cycle of behaviours as a “morally and commercially self-centred tit-for-tat payback scheme”.

At both local and global levels, Brendtro & Du Toit (2005: 18) explain how “curricula of control” have come to dominate:

In South Africa (for example), many staff feel that they have no means of controlling problem behaviour and that their authority is undermined. In similar situations across the world, educators simply find other ways to punish and control children. Prominent examples include expulsion and physical restraint, which are now common in programmes for challenging children and youth, even in some preschools.

This imperative to regulate and subordinate is unsurprising given Foucault’s theoretical analysis of the 1970s of how social practices operated within institutions, and beyond, with regard to discipline and issues of social behaviour. In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, Foucault (1977) extensively outlined how monitoring, regulation, and policing operated in prisons and how, through repeated use and respect for established forms of action and their authority, the instituted ways of doing things created their ‘own regimes of truth’ with a seemingly intractable sense of appropriateness and transparency (Garland, 1990: 4). Foucault reminded us that we needed to know what punishment itself was, in order to understand what it could or should be, and how it ‘worked’ at the local levels of prisons, asylums, hospitals, factories and schools.

In emphasising that his analytical model could easily be applied to schools, Foucault noted that punishment (and discipline) comprised of a complex set of interlinked processes, inclinations and sensibilities, and condensed these for a range of different purposes and meanings (Garland, 1990: 17). Furthermore, punishment (and discipline) also had cultural and historical styles and traditions that relied heavily on “institutional, technical, and discursive conditions” (Garland, 1990: 19).

As such, ‘disciplining’ and ‘punishing’ could be understood not solely in terms of the *control* of ill-discipline, but also what it meant for the overall school and the particular challenges it is confronted with in a given context.

Thus, challenging the notion that ill-discipline and behavioural deviance were social problems for which there could be simple technical institutional solutions and which could be contained within individual institutions (like schools), Foucault asserted that discipline and behavioural deviance were active parts of the social environment and context in which they played themselves out, and were aspects of a mutually constituting configuration of elements that made up individual social worlds (Garland 1990: 22).

Currently, it is generally claimed that ‘discipline problems’ have become an endemic problem to South African schools. Policy makers and educators daily complain about the escalating disciplinary problems within schools that adversely affects learning. It is equally acknowledged that punitive coercion in the form of *punishment* and *discipline* has been a largely unsuccessful educational method, an irony identified by Skinner as early as 1948. While various alternative interventions have been experimented with (Porteus & Vally 2001), it nonetheless remains unclear how best to engage with this schooling challenge.

For the thesis, I realised that a link could be drawn between *removing* perpetrators of crimes from society (to prisons) and the recent *exclusionary* practices of punishment at schools. Whereas referrals, suspensions and expulsions have always been part of punitive practices in schools, recent harsh and intolerant systems of ‘discipline’ (like exclusion from education of those associated with “Zero Tolerance” policies) highlight how procedures have not only taken on substantially new (even dangerous) forms, but also have become fundamental parts of labelling processes in a variety of different social spaces. As Yang (2009: 51) notes:

Broad patterns and ethnographic data show us that the more times students are sent to the office; the more likely they are to become “pushouts”.

In fact, it is not an inconsequential irony - as noted by Foucault with regard to prisons - that the majority of punitive practices in schools in the contemporary era have not only resoundingly failed, but have even *produced* many more ‘transgressors’, despite supposedly being designed to ‘help’.

While I have not sought to provide answers to these challenges in the thesis, I have used the questions and points above as key positions of departure to explore intersecting links between notions of punishment and what is commonly referred to as *undisciplined behaviour* in

schools. I assert that the row of supposed ‘miscreants’ at Avondale High School is not an isolated or singularly confined phenomenon, and serves as a useful entry point to better understand the nature of discipline and punishment in schools and how youth understand, respond to and ‘perform’ discipline.

1.3 The research problem and research questions

Starting with the view that many youth often engage in different kinds of behaviour because of their youthfulness and various attempts to understand their particular worlds (Pinnock 1984), I was initially interested in exploring *why* youth transgressed and *how* their behaviour had become for them some sort of ‘subculture’. Drawn to the topic (given the prevalence of debates about discipline in schools currently in South Africa and the ways it is engaged at the policy level in education), my initial view was that I would be able to explore issues of school discipline at the junct of the local and global. My view was that I would show how this emerged at the school level where youth cultures came up against the rules, regulations, and policies that sought to regulate youth actions and movements within school.

However, in reading the literature, I increasingly realised that my study should preferably focus on how youth in *one geographical space* understood school discipline in relation to their particular expectations and social experiences, and that this approach may offer a different perspective on my initial concerns about school discipline.

To do so, I had to assume that the notion of ‘discipline’ extended beyond merely a technical definition of ‘rules that regulated acceptable behaviour’ and that it was tied to many national and international debates on how individuals who did not conform to the rules of defined societies were treated. I came to the conclusion that, as such, I had to explore what *discipline* meant for youth at schools and their interaction with a defined set of rules that governed their actions for the time that they spent at school. Given departmental policies defining school discipline, what were these policies meant to achieve? How did learners understand these rules and regulations? And how did they feel about the constraints these placed on their behaviour and actions at school? Furthermore, I had to assume that there were youth counter-narratives of the meaning of ‘discipline’ expanding upon how they interacted and lived therewith in their everyday lives.

In summary then: having started out wanting to understand *why* youth transgressed, my central research concern for the thesis became focused on trying to understand the *experiences of youth with regard to school discipline* and the kinds of processes and

developments that led to *particular learners becoming visible* within the schooling arena as a result of what was deemed ‘unacceptable behaviour’. In so doing, my starting premise had to assume that youth did not transgress rules merely for the sake thereof.

To engage with the above concern, my main research question consequently sought to engage with how youth lived *discipline* at Avondale High School and to interrogate what this revealed about the school, the surrounding community, and society in general. Thus, the research focus was on:

- (1) how youth understood and lived discipline at a defined school and the ways it shaped their thinking, with
- (2) sub-questions exploring how youth explained why they were being identified for punishment and how they explained particular actions being deemed unacceptable in their given school context.

1.4 How the study was rationalised and conceptualised

1.4.1 Rationale

The main rationale for the study was that by problematising the meanings of resistant youth behaviour at one high school in Cape Town in relation to school rules, I would be able to make better sense of those assumptions that are readily made about learners that act back on said policies by ‘breaking the rules’, as well as what the concept of ‘discipline’ meant for youth in particular school and social contexts.

I further rationalised that I would arrive at a deeper sense of how discipline was learnt, understood, and lived by the youth at this specific school, if I focussed on how *they* understood the various terms, issues, and dilemmas. I had to find a way to explicitly highlight this in the thesis, and it followed quite logically and imperatively that the *voices of youth* had to be foregrounded. Consequently, it came as a surprise that the very opinions of the youth themselves were rarely sought or captured (as if they had no opinion of what ‘discipline’ was or could be) in most of the literature that I examined for the project.

As such, my methodology and definitional use had to reflect not only these vivid interchanges, but also capture even more deeply varied understandings about youth and ‘discipline’ than those that had framed the project at its inception. Consequently, my view was that my chosen methodology and approach needed to be informed and influenced by my

various interactions with the study's subjects given that, in the end, it was from these interchanges that a number of methodological decisions and developments emerged.

Furthermore, in terms of the study's rationalisation, another dynamic that had to be inserted early on was the context of the school, Avondale High: its history, ethos, lived behaviours and expectations, and formal codes of conduct, as it was these that informed the perceived anomaly of 'undisciplined behaviour' in this space. Regarding the importance of social context, Berkhout (2008) has noted that schooling contexts *externally* mirror how learners are categorised and *internally reproduce structures and criteria* that shape the way learners think and associate, not only about and with themselves, but also others.

For these reasons, the reader will encounter the methodology chapter in the thesis earlier than is normally expected, as I endeavour to show how learner input influenced the ways in which the study was conceived and executed. Notably, my key arguments are informed mainly by what the learners say about school discipline and not by what school practitioners or policy say disciplinary processes need to accomplish. In this methodology chapter, the reader is thus provided with not only key aspects and decisions about methodology and method, but also introduced to the actual school context as well as the study subjects themselves.

A final rationale for the study was thus that the captured views of youth had to reflect not only the individuals' understandings of discipline, but also their negotiations therewith and how they sought to subvert (even re-invent) societal constructs in ways that seemingly provided emancipatory counter-narratives for each of them. I further resolved to take into consideration what Back (2007: 9) calls the interrelationship between an "anthropology of the near" and "an anthropology of the far", highlighting the very real interplay between the immediate lived-in spaces that learners engaged with locally, and global subjectivities and representations (that came to them through a variety of electronic, technological and also physical global interactions).

1.4.2 Literature as a conceptual and theoretical basis for the thesis

When it comes to issues of discipline and punishment, there is a wide range of work that has been produced over the past century and a half from both theoretical and applied science perspectives. Conducted at national and international levels, there can thus be little doubt that the issue of youth and discipline in the contemporary period, in quite different settings and countries, is of global concern. On a definitional and conceptual level, the reader will thus find in this thesis a smattering of different views from authors that I found illuminating with

regard to issues of the youth, their ‘culture’, discipline and punishment against the backdrop of their everyday living.

Similarly, there has also been considerable work on the various counter-narratives that have emerged to contest standard and conventional views of the issue. However, given the size of this thesis and fearing that a closer engagement with these literatures would distract the reader from the project’s master narrative, I have engaged in this thesis only with the portion of works that help to elucidate the story that I have sought to represent. While I mainly focused in the thesis on the views of Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, I do not in any way suggest that these are the principal or most authoritative views on the various issues. Rather, I have used their arguments to highlight and exemplify the rich variety of ways in which the learner contributions (from fieldwork) on discipline can be heard, analysed and interpreted. I do this by interspersing what learners expressed during the research project against a backdrop of theoretical and conceptual pointers that I had found in the literature. As such, the views of theorists represented a frame of reference by which I create a “dialogue-across-time-and-space” between them and modern South African youth, and thereby seek to provide a functional platform from which to engage with the issue of school discipline.

In this regard, I am well aware that the master narrative provided here cannot necessarily be generalised to wider populations and offer the thesis as my particular insight into this very complex and contentious issue.

1.4 Key assertions

Youth live and perform school discipline in both diverse and particular ways, and these ‘performativities’ should not be interpreted as representative of their attitudes towards and views of their roles within individualised spaces or society in general.

This main assertion of the thesis is grounded in a very simple premise, namely that the ways in which such above-mentioned youth ‘cultures’ intersect with institutional and societal structures, like school discipline, are more complex and contradictory than has been hitherto acknowledged. In South Africa, this notion is quite evident in the writings of Dolby (2001), Soudien (2007), Jansen (2009), Bray *et al* (2010), and Swartz (2010) who in various ways have highlighted how aspects of culture, race, class formation, historical legacy, institutional prejudice, and complex approaches to development have led to particular learners and communities bearing the brunt of past and present experiences of poverty and social

marginalisation, and how their agencies are often stereotypically interpreted as transgressive, aberrant, and misinformed. These issues are further explored by international authors such as France (2007), Dimitriadis (2008), Dillabough & Kennelly (2010) and Giroux (2009; 2012).

I suggest in this study that current comprehensions and interpretations at policy, departmental, and practitioner level show quite low and inauthentic understandings of the key concept of “discipline”, namely that learners who are deemed to be ‘ill-disciplined’ have invariably been positioned in ways that might further encourage, even entrench, aberrant behaviour.

I argue that it is imperative that learner views on the issue are captured, understood, and taken seriously if engagement with this contemporary concern is to contribute to any meaningful way to better understanding ‘ill-discipline’ at schools currently. In this regard, learners emphasised in the study that educators, management staff, and departmental officials invariably misunderstood learner engagement with school discipline, and that adults were more interested in successfully implementing school and departmental policies than in fully assisting them, the learners, to understand their role and place within educational and societal structures.

1.6 Thesis design and structure

This section introduces the layout of the thesis and presents a brief structural overview.

This chapter, Chapter 1, explains the origins of the thesis itself, its rationale and briefly points to the conceptual and theoretical issues at its very foundation. I identify Avondale’s “Dust Bin Kids” as a metaphor for the social dilemma of *disposable learners* and describe how this educational conundrum led to the research problem and research questions identified (and consequently addressed) in this thesis. In conceptualising my study, I comment in short on the rationale, engagement with relative literature and key assertions that lie at the heart of this thesis.

Chapter 2 is threefold in structure: firstly, it unpacks my epistemological position and qualitative and interpretive methodology regarding the process of enquiry, commenting specifically on the role of the researcher, the youthful participant, and essential ethical considerations governing the research. (A brief description of the process of data collection is included here.) Secondly, the research site of Avondale High is described from a historical and interpretive perspective, grounding the setting so that the reader understands the lived-in school world of the youth in this thesis. This is followed by procedural explanations and

descriptions of the selection of research participants. Following are introductions to the interviewees themselves for the reader to get a sense of their quite different social lives and inter-active and personal views on youth and discipline.

Chapter 3 is concerned with defining and understanding the parameters of the concept *youth* that is so central to this thesis. The focus is on the interrelatedness between global and local interpretations, with the voices of the youth at Avondale contributing to - even widening - the meaning and comprehension of said concept. Furthermore, I engage with the concept of *youth culture* and propose understandings of this abstraction. Once again, literature on a global and South African level is explored, and the ideas and opinions of youth at Avondale High are incorporated. The hitherto small body of local studies on *youth culture* is surprising, and in this instance contributions by Dolby, Soudien, Swartz and Vally and Dalamba are especially meaningful. It was significant to note that Avondale learners engage fully with markers of youth culture, especially on the levels of accommodational, confrontational, and exclusionary behaviour.

Owing to the exceptionally rich literature on the concept of 'discipline', the conceptualisation in literature alone is explored in this chapter. (Theories and youth voices are expanded fully later in the study.) I examine definitions and characteristics of the term, 'discipline' by focussing on international literature and work done in South Africa. A brief look at changes in the disciplinary policies of the South African Department of Basic Education is also undertaken. Taking all literature consulted into consideration, this chapter concludes with a suggested 'definition' of *discipline*: as being bound by procedures and situations; being a reciprocal, ambivalent, and inter-personal relationship; and involving firm relationships of 'power'.

Subsequently, Chapter 4 interrogates the work of Durkheim, Foucault and Bourdieu with regard to their views on *discipline*; and concurrently, with *punishment*. On a theoretical level, the theories of Durkheim, Foucault, and Bourdieu regarding 'discipline' are brought into relation with three abstract definitional parameters, as deduced in Chapter 3. In capturing the relevance and role of 'discipline' in this way, a variety of views and approaches is established. Consequently, a conceptual framework is constructed, and it is this theoretical structure that was used to analyse how the learners at Avondale 'spoke back'.

Chapter 5 focuses on the voices of the youth, as represented by young learners at Avondale High School in the Western Cape. In this chapter, the youth express themselves

unequivocally and speak back to theory and theorists. Within the structure of three identified parameters of ‘discipline’, the youth present their counter-narratives. I found that the youth lived Avondale High as a metaphorical ‘battlefield’; one upon which the struggle for power among interactive participants, friend and foe alike, was played out daily. Consequently, the deep divide between theory and practice relating to the concept of ‘discipline’ in South African education was revealed; leading to the study’s main conclusion that it is the under-theorisation of key concepts and theories related to the concept that led to the understanding of ‘discipline’ being largely one that regarded youth as unruly and misbehaved (Marais and Meier 2010).

Chapter 6 serves as the study’s conclusion. The chapter utilises the poem *Housing Targets* by Kelwyn Sole (Kozain 2006) as a metaphor by which to pull together all the various strands of argument and to highlight the key aspects and findings of the thesis.

1.7 Significance of the study

This thesis illustrates that challenges by youth to school discipline needs to be understood in more nuanced ways if discipline is to play a meaningful role in the functioning of schools. Brendtro & Du Toit (2005: 31 - 49) rightly point out that while “rule-breaking becomes a practice run at independence”, and while “adults seek control” and “youth seek autonomy” in the ensuing power struggles, building walls between them would only make “wall-climbing a sport” and offer little to understanding the meaning and importance of discipline in schools. The significance of this thesis lies in its problematisation of the issue of school discipline through the eyes of the youth against the backdrop of their everyday living and understanding.

Where the study offers a further important contribution, is in the window it provides for the reader onto the worlds of the youth and especially on how the youth, through their individualised and temporal youth cultures, ‘perform discipline’. As such, it is a testament to the irreplaceable contribution that youth views can make to educational research.

CHAPTER 2

DESCRIBING METHODOLOGY AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The purpose of research is to inform action.

<http://www.uniteforsight.org/research-methodology>

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore how youth understood, learnt, and lived discipline at Avondale High School. In order to do this, the voices of youth were foregrounded. In terms of thesis structure, the methodology chapter is provided early on in order to utilise the views of youth in subsequent chapters.

When the study was first conceptualised and articulated, it was important to ensure that the methodology would allow for not only the reflection of the varied understandings and views that youth had about core concepts used in the study (such as ‘youth’ and ‘discipline’), but also would afford the necessary scope within which those perceptions expressed by the youth could be communicated to the reader. In fact, as the study unfolded at the beginning, it was the interchanges with Avondale youth that came to determine - even *predetermine*- the methodological decisions that were made.

This chapter further details my engagement with issues of quality and ethics and the sampling methods I employed in deciding on the study’s subjects. Importantly for the thesis, I employed and used information and data that emerged from a variety of sources: informal conversations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews.

I highlight my positionality as researcher and the fact that I had to take cognisance of the ways in which my points of view shaped the study very particularly. Here I was reminded by Krauss (2005: 760), citing Trochim (2000), that:

The researcher is a unique individual and all research is essentially biased. There is thus no point in trying to ‘establish validity’ in any external or objective sense.

Another dimension that needed to be factored into my methodological reasoning was the timeous introduction of the social ‘background’ of the learners. Without the reader being *au fait* with the context and history of Avondale High School and how the school’s particular legacies, understandings, and codes of conduct informed the supposed or perceived anomaly of ‘undisciplined behaviour’, learners would be speaking into a void.

A further vital aspect needed to be considered at the methodological stage as well: how could the opinions of the subjects be understood if the reader did not know who they were? Consequently, the youth participating in this study had to be introduced as early as possible, in order for authentic meaning to be made.

In consequence, in this chapter I not only outline the methodological paradigms and methods employed in the study, but also introduce the reader to the context of the school under investigation, and the backgrounds and profiles of the youth that partook in the study.

2.2 The process of enquiry: developing structure through method – epistemological position and methodology

A research paradigm holds forth an assumption about the world and provides a structure for research about that “world”. According to Mertens (2005), a paradigm guides the process of enquiry and the selection of appropriate research methods and methodologies. Interestingly, Niglas (2001) points out that assuming the mutual exclusivity of paradigms is foolhardy, and studies that accepted that there were shared influences and views across different paradigms, such as functionalism and a critical approach, may even yield improved findings.

As much as the methodologies chosen were predetermined by the very nature and the specific focus of the study itself, so too was the epistemological orientation. Despite the researcher undertaking the description and understanding of the complex experiences from the point of view of those who lived these experiences (Schwandt, as in Mertens 2005: 12), Krauss (2005: 763) explains that as a researcher draws meaning from and gives meaning to such ‘lived experiences’, the researcher engages in a process of ‘*translating*’ or ‘*interpreting*’ these into how *the researcher* thinks and feels:

As such, meaning is the underlying motivation behind thoughts, actions and even the interpretation and application of knowledge. People have the freedom to choose meaning through their interactive experiencing with various internal and external contexts. It is the individual’s subjectivity that forms the very core of meaning organisation and evolvment.

2.2.1 Epistemological Positioning

Given that fully objective and value-free research is largely a myth and countless human (and thus subjective) decisions are made throughout research processes (Johnson 2004), the researcher should remain ever conscious that he is always a subjective participant, and as such, undeniably becomes part of the research process. As much as I initially sought to adopt an objective and unbiased approach, I soon recognised that there were aspects of the study

that were directly related to my position as an educator, and even more personal subjectivities, which I could not negate.

I thus needed to acknowledge from the outset that my own history and life context influenced the way I engaged with the study, problematised its issues, and viewed its context and participants. Dobson, as cited by Krauss (2005: 759), describes this in the following way:

The researcher's theoretical lens is suggested as playing an important role in the choice of methods because of the underlying belief system of the researcher.

Furthermore, when I engaged with the study's methodological paradigms, I realised that my construction of meaning (from the data I had collected) was influenced by particular conceptions of the underlying structures of discipline; both at the school and in the lives of learners. No matter how I phrased or posed the questions, even taking my subjectivity into account, the established rules and codes of behaviour at Avondale High shaped and informed both the actions of youth (with regards to discipline) and adult interpretations of such actions. This was the first really sobering finding that I came to in the thesis.

2.2.2 Developing structure through qualitative and interpretive methodology

As 'methodology' is defined as "the particular systematic practices followed to attain knowledge" (Kavanagh 2002: 732), it seemed to me that my most basic research aim was to "attain knowledge" by "systematically" *giving meaning to* and *making meaning of* the interactions of learners with discipline structures at a specific school.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

A challenge for this study was how to capture and explain the different ways in which a contested and complex concept (namely, 'discipline'), was considered and used by the learners who lived it in their daily lives at school. Clandinin, Pushor & Orr (2007: 21) suggest, in this regard, that:

Inquiry is a useful way of understanding experience, where the inquirer enters the matrix in the midst of experiencing, concluding the enquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both social and individual.

Consequently, it was noted that a qualitative approach provided a suitable method in order to interrogate how learners - both as participants within a broader society and individuals - negotiated their lived-in spaces and "made meaning as they go about their activities in the world" (Scott & Morrison, 2006: 131). The use of qualitative methodology thus dovetailed with the intended foregrounding of learners' voices in order to make sense and meaning of

their interpretations and conceptualisations of their experiences and worlds (Cohen *et al*, 2001: 23).

INTERPRETIVE METHODOLOGY

In this study, following the interpretive approach would give voice to learners whose views were rarely considered - or even recognized. In this way, complex issues and phenomena were illuminated and according to Sofaer (1999: 1101), one could move toward explanation and “generate theories and test hypotheses.”

Conveying understanding of the views articulated by the learner subjects (as expressed in their questionnaires and interviews) required painstaking and detailed interpretation. This would remain the singular responsibility as researcher, and in order to apply such *interpretative* methodology authentically and effectively, it followed that the starting point was to critically examine my particular role.

THE RESEARCHER AS SUBJECTIVE PARTNER

Reference has already been made to the innate predispositions researchers introduce into research projects. Accordingly, the unique subjectivity of researchers brings both limitations and benefits to studies (Trochim, 2000).

In the first place, a researcher invariably participates in the same life worlds of his subjects (Healy & Perry, 2000). A frequent concern, however, is that in doing so he will further complicate the already fluid and multiple lived-in realities (Krauss, 2005). One way of dealing with this, was for me to make allowances within the research and interview process for changes and amendments by the interviewees.

Secondly, researchers take on difficult and unique roles and in this case, the specific role of *listening* participant. As listening is a most complex endeavour (Back, 2007), extra care needed to be taken to understand the contemporary worlds of subjects. More importantly, as researcher I needed to not only listen *to* the learners’ stories, but constantly be listening *for* the master narrative within their formulations.

Thirdly, researchers shape the research process by construing particular meaning to the words of interviewees, through reconstruction and interpretation of the communicated social experiences. In this regard, the “explicit and implicit assumptions” (Berkhout, 2007: 409) contained within language can often provide linguistic constraints and challenges that impact on the effective capturing and reflection of what was said (Cheng, 2000: 207; Sullivan, 2004:

46). This required the researcher's making of meaning through a process that Derrida refers to as a "slower and attentive reading of narrative language" (as cited in Andrews, 2008: 17).

Lastly, attention to the complex 'making-of-meaning' needed to extend to the transcription of recorded interviews (Andrews, 2008: 15). Here an immediate dichotomy between the information obtained from *literal transcripts* and how the researcher *interpreted* such data became apparent. Furthermore, for transcripts to be regarded as valid and meaningful I, as researcher, had to include references to facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and other paralingual forms of communication used during the actual interviews.

Having noted the above, there is little doubt that my subjectivity as educator at Avondale High School played a significant role in the ways in which I came to understand and interpret the standpoints of the various participants in this study. Having taught at five other schools before taking up employment at Avondale High School in 2005, I understood that my attitude regarding many of the particular school rules and the school's ethos had been firmly shaped by what I had experienced before. I also knew I had to contend with my personal preferences and interpretations regarding issues of "discipline". While I was deeply reflexive throughout the project about my views and positionality, I need to concede that I found following an interpretive methodology a desperately difficult and uneasy process, especially in that my analysis was immersed in the dominant school ethos and culture.

THE ROLE OF THE YOUTHFUL PARTICIPANT

At the very basis of my study, is the premise that the youth is worthy, and as human beings they are able to speak for themselves and "provide data in their own right" (Hood, 1996: 122). A key characteristic of an interpretive methodology is that interviewees be treated as having meaningful agency. In this regard, the discussion of aspects contributing to the ethical issues later in this chapter serves to emphasise the full awareness of both the risk and responsibility of working with youthful participants (Hood, 1996).

Furthermore, the subjective *realities* of interviewees must be understood in relation to the particular *social contexts* within which such realities are experienced. Schwandt (as cited in Mertens, 2005: 12) states:

The researcher should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who lived it, while navigating through complex socio-economic, cultural, and political environments.

In narrating the particularities of their daily lives, their relationships, practices and opinions learner participants often revealed deeply layered experiences. Andrews (2008: 18)

consequently identifies a further aspect: that narrations and reflections of lived encounters imply, invariably, incompleteness. As researcher, I had to factor in that owing to these complexities, learner subjects themselves often were still trying to ‘decode’ and give meaning to their personal encounters. Furthermore, Parker (2005: 3) notes that:

People tell stories about particular things that happened to them or about the course of their lives in a certain culturally-specific way, and this means that the comments of individuals should not be taken at face value; rather, they need to be located in wider structures of discourse and power so that their implications and ramifications can be fully understood.

2.3 Issues of ethics and the process of data collection

In the gathering of data for this thesis, I applied throughout commonly recognised ethical principles, as identified by the British Educational Research Association (<http://www.bera.ac.uk/ethics-and-educational-research>). These conventions provided the main parameters and boundaries within which I conducted data-collection and research.

2.3.1 Equity in research

Considering an ethical approach called into question how I would engage with the variety of participants (and their interactions with institutional disciplinary structures) in the study and ensure that their views and positions were presented equitably and fairly. This meant that I had to think about (and position) the research in ways that took into account the opinions and sensitivities of various youthful individuals (and, indirectly, even particular adults involved with the school as educational institution) and reflect their accounts in unbiased and non-discriminatory ways.

This was particularly difficult, given the complex nature of my research topic and the diverse views of the research subjects involved. Some participants questioned me on the possibly exploitative nature of the project in that only I would benefit, as well as its value to them on a personal level. Some, rather unexpectedly, displayed feelings of inadequacy and disempowerment. I dealt with this, I hope, by treating their definitions and understandings with deference and esteem, as required in order to engage on a meaningful level with the research problem and the thesis focus. It should perhaps be noted that among the interviewees, there was a fair degree of common purpose (Buckingham, 1993; Hey 1994, as referred to in Hood, 1996: 124) and an unstated common acknowledgement of what ‘discipline’ meant in the particular school context. Furthermore, it seemed that there was a

very broad general understanding of the role of ‘discipline’ in the functioning of the school, and its utilisation by different individuals as they displayed different levels of power.

Moreover, what I found fascinating was that my ‘position of power’ as educator (in relation to the learner-subjects’ social positioning as “inferiors” as identified by Hood [1996: 121]) did not make them uncomfortable or overly concerned at all, and that this ‘relationship of inequality’ was accepted as part and parcel of the research process itself. To my mind, the familiar position of ‘inequality’ possibly provided a comfortable and recognizable underpinning of the *status quo*, and one against which their explanations and understandings of issues of discipline could easily be communicated. Some of the participants openly welcomed the new-found opportunity to tell me ‘how things were’: a number expressing a kind of humbling appreciation of the ‘respect’ shown their opinions, while an individual or two saw their answers as an opportunity to challenge and test me.

Hood (1996: 118) notes that youth permanently live within their given social categories (as “victims, threats, vulnerable incompetents or deviants”) and that their understandings of such categories often contribute in crucial ways to how ‘outsiders’ - like researchers - are allowed to hear them explain their worlds and convey their knowledge of aspects of their societies. Understanding the youth, if one starts from the social position of adulthood, requires listening attentively to their agendas and participating with them in the research process.

2.3.2 Research *for* and *of* the subjects: process and data collection

While there are quite fundamental reasons why researchers need to be deeply vigilant and ethically aware when doing research, Hammersley (2009: 219) cautions that ‘ethical regulators’ often induce a kind of moralism that exaggerates the importance of abstract ethical principles at the expense of producing “good quality research findings”. Bearing in mind Hammersley’s (2009: 211) “different forms of ethicism” - which include on the one hand researchers that give conventional ethical issues too much priority and on the other hand those that interpret and approach their ethical responsibilities in overly simple and *laissez faire* ways, I sought in the thesis not only to fulfil my duties as highlighted within university and research policy regulations, but also to do right by my subjects and acknowledge, respect, and properly appreciate their contributions to the project. During this study, I was continually reminded that the project orientation needed to emphasise being “*with* and *for* the young” (Hood 1996: 119).

Thus, while I ensured that I had secured the necessary permission from the provincial education authority (Western Cape Education Department) [ADDENDUM A], Stellenbosch University [ADDENDUM B], the principal and the school governing body of Avondale High School [ADDENDUM C] and the consent of the parents of the subjects that I sought to interview [ADDENDUM D], I was most keen to procure the assent from the learners [ADDENDUM E] and then safeguard the interests of the learner subjects. This was, in my opinion, testament to ‘being with the youth’.

Given the focus of the thesis, namely how the youth at a defined school understood and lived issues of ‘discipline’, it was deeply ironic that the assent of learners could only be sought and secured at the end of a long line of negotiations with the above noted “gatekeeper” bodies and individuals (Hood, 1996: 120). The process of data collection was initially a cumbersome one: permission from the Western Cape Education Department took nearly 3 months. Furthermore, the ethical processes of gaining permission from individual parents and assent from the particular learners themselves to participate took five weeks.

Data for this project was mainly collected from two sources: the initial *questionnaires* [ADDENDUM F] (completed by 72 learners) and the subsequent semi-structured *interviews* [ADDENDUM G] with 13 learners.

Two Grade-9 classes of 36 learners each were asked to fill in questionnaires anonymously and voluntarily. By asking so many learners to complete the questionnaire, a broad spectrum of viewpoints on what learners thought about discipline in general and how it played out at our school in particular, was found.

I also viewed each questionnaire as a kind of ‘introduction’: here I was to find out first-hand if the questions I had about ‘issues of discipline’ in any way resonated within learners themselves. In addition, the questionnaires were aimed at ascertaining whether the learners *wished* to engage with the questions regarding ‘discipline’ and structures thereof at Avondale.

Meticulously following the process of ethics, I based specific questions on aspects identified in the thesis and informed by the research problem and research sub-questions, all the while keeping my terminology on a par with the language abilities of 15 or 16-year olds. In terms of the 10 questions set in the questionnaire, my aim was to tease out broader perceptions of ‘discipline’ and the more personal interpretations thereof prevalent at our school. The process was non-invasive, mainly due to two aspects: the headmaster had given permission for the questionnaires to be filled in during one of the non-academic lessons; and because I had taken

great pains to emphasise the *voluntary* nature of the exercise. A sub-section of the questionnaire (Question 2) furthermore allowed the learners to describe and briefly comment on their personal disciplinary encounters. (Many learners, afterwards, described a feeling of catharsis in participating in this part questionnaire.)

Once again adhering strictly to ethical requirements, I eventually sat down and conversed individually with 13 learners who had volunteered from the two classes to participate in interviews. All had provided the necessary assent, with consent from their parents or guardians having been obtained earlier. Each engagement was in the form of a semi-structured interview, during which a learner would communicate his (or her) replies to the 15 questions I asked; questions which, as such, provided the *structure* of each dialogue.

Although the questions asked in the semi-structured interview had singularly been designed to tease out learners' perceptions of 'discipline' and how they experienced these structures at Avondale High School, learners' answers displayed a maturity far beyond my initial expectations, as they keenly discussed links between the *school space*, their lives at *home* and what they perceived to be *global* similarities.

2.3.3 Risk, Harm, and Malfeasance

The British Educational Research Association emphasised throughout the article, *Ethics in educational research* (<http://www.bera.ac.uk/ethics-and-educational-research>), that research must always comply with the rule of law, with close attention to the vulnerability of children and the prevention of their abuse, and the exploitation of their trust, as highlighted by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 12 of this UN Convention (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights-overview>) notes that while all children must be given the opportunity to express their views freely and clearly in all matters affecting them (commensurate with their age and maturity) and that these views must be always be carefully listened to, care must constantly be taken to seek and include the collaboration of their guardians. The understanding is that guardians must step in and prevent adult researchers from taking advantage of the views expressed and contributions of young people (Hood 1996: 126).

The above guideline is neither meant to 'other' the youth, nor to label them in ways that treat them as "vulnerable and in need of protection" (Lahman 2011: 304), but to acknowledge and accommodate their agency. Hood (1996: 126) observes that "children mostly construct and

negotiate their own understandings of risk and harm” and that they are more often than not capable and competent to know when they are being misled or exploited.

However, there is never any danger in putting mechanisms in place that avoid harm to youthful participants in research projects (Gorman 2007: 18). As such, there always needs to be an initial assessment in each project about who might be potentially at risk of being injured in the study and how, in particular, they might be harmed.

Surprisingly, researchers themselves also run the risk of being harmed while engaged in research. In this study, for example, school managers were concerned about what the thesis would find and say, given the delicate nature of the topic of ‘discipline’ and the role of ‘discipline’ within the school. As the researcher, I am also employed as an educator at the school, and as such the research placed me in a somewhat precarious position. Trying to maintain the balance between being an *outsider* (the researcher) and *insider* (being an educator at the research site) was difficult in terms of not straining working relationships or putting the standing of the school at risk. The school management remained keen, however, for the project to proceed given its topicality and the belief that its findings - whatever the outcome - would assist those at the school in better understanding learner behaviour and discipline issues.

It remains a truism that the learner subject is regarded as being at most risk of harm. In this study, I endeavoured the protection of the young individuals by giving them pseudonyms from the outset, in order to assure the anonymity of said participants. I further changed the name of the relevant school and avoided referring to any obvious landmarks or other identifiers that would point to the school’s identity.

Secondly, I deliberately selected a cohort of Grade 9-learners that I did not teach. In this way, I made certain that learners would neither agree to be interviewed out of deference to me as their educator, nor tell me what they thought I ‘wanted to hear’. From my side, it was refreshing to meet and engage with learners at the school, whom I had never spoken to before.

Thirdly, I remained conscious throughout the process of data collection that participants could experience discomfort or distress and thus took steps to constantly put such learners at ease. Specifically, I consciously tried to reduce feelings of ‘intrusion’. In so doing, I remained mindful of the opinion of Hammersley (2009: 214) regarding the positionality of the researcher:

One should always enter the field as though on one's knees, requesting permission to be there. This posture is not merely an entry ploy but a posture that one needs to maintain throughout the entire research.

Furthermore, I reminded myself that my research should fundamentally always serve the interests of others, even if it were only a single individual learner, the population of our school or society on a broad level. This idea of 'common good' grounded the ways in which I collected my data and how I conducted interviews, as emphasised by Hammersley (2009: 214):

Researchers should always promote the capabilities of those being researched as regards to what is necessary for an improved quality of life.

Conversely, learner subjects participating in the study also noted that they felt that by participating they could contribute to such a 'common good': many stated they had agreed to take part because they believed they could add to the understandings of 'discipline' at our school and that it was important to 'help the school' to understand learners and their actions.

2.3.4 Autonomy

The very nature of doing research with *children* requires deference to parents and to submit to the demands of these adults. This makes complying fully with some of the ethical dimensions of *autonomy* difficult, given its definition as "the possession or right of self-government" (Kavanagh 2002: 72). How does the researcher simultaneously defer to the guardians and adhere to the wishes and views of the youthful subjects being interviewed?

During the process of data-collection, I remained cognisant of this paradoxical character of the ethical requirement of autonomy, all the time keeping in mind that youth was in itself a valid social group with independent and alternative views. In the questionnaires and the interviews, learners often went to great pains to emphasise their perspectives and differences with parental actions and standpoints. Hood (1996: 118) reiterates that:

It is the youth whose interests are not necessarily harmonious with those of 'the home' and its adults, nor are necessarily coterminous with the values of the home and the school.

Similarly, the outlook of youth might also invariably be distinct and contrary to that of the researcher, who herself is an adult and has particular views on youth rights and duties. In collecting data and in the writing of the thesis, I endeavoured to engage with the voices and perceptions of youth at Avondale High School as autonomous, listening attentively to their standpoints, and treating their participation as equal and valid within the research process. This was not always easy, but it certainly shaped my disposition throughout the project.

Importantly, the above challenges were vigorously addressed in the technical aspects of gaining permission for the study, for it was here where the parameters and boundaries within the study needed to be firmly established. Thus, in both the letters sent to the research participants, those requesting parental consent [ADDENDUM D] and those asking for the learners' assent [ADDENDUM E], it was clearly stipulated that the decision to participate in the research was theirs in consultation with their parent-guardians. In this regard, I scrupulously avoided any kind of possible misinterpretation or misrepresentation of research procedures or goals. I concede, however, that while independent and informed consent is an important principle that addresses issues of autonomy and respect, 'autonomy' is a singularly complex concept and my efforts to abide by it did not necessarily ensure that all associated ethical dilemmas were resolved.

2.3.5 Privacy and confidentiality

My approach to the research processes and data-collection for this study was a fairly simple one, namely that I had to pursue what is referred to as 'worthwhile enquiry'. I thus needed to not only provide research that in some way served the interests of those involved, but also eventually publish the findings and conclusions reached as a result of research encounters (<http://www.ethiopia-ed.net/images/864405026.doc>). I grew to be constantly aware that any presumed worthwhile enquiry would have consequences and that any decision on the supposed 'interests served' and 'research findings' was a daunting and intimidating responsibility.

From the outset, I was confronted by a dichotomy: I had to ground the perceptions of the learners regarding 'discipline' in a particular school setting, but had to guard against possible damage done to the reputation of that particular educational institution. I endeavoured to avoid the mention of any identifiable landmark or aspect, and call the school 'Avondale High' throughout the thesis. Despite my efforts, I remain fully aware that a few singular characteristics might have been mentioned in this study, which may make the identity of the school known to the reader. Furthermore, attempts have been made to assure privacy and confidentiality by providing pseudonyms for all educators in positions of management, or those mentioned by learners in questionnaires or interviews.

Conversely, the same difficult challenge was to be met with regard to concerns raised by guardians and school managers (and the youthful interviewees themselves) about safeguarding the interests of all participants contributing to the research. Once again, the

provision of pseudonyms for all learners (and others) and the masking of any identifiable personal traits or characteristics provided that I could comfortably meet the ethical principles of privacy and confidentiality.

2.3.6 Reciprocity

One of the most humbling aspects of this research process was witnessing the extent to which youthful learners were willing to give of themselves and their time to enable ‘better understanding’ of issues of ‘discipline’. They asked for no reward (nor were there any on offer) other than for this study to authentically convey their contributions and viewpoints.

On the other hand, much time was spent by me as researcher in initial meetings to facilitate permission, to gain access to the school site, to find time to introduce the aim of the research, explain the process, and make myself known as researcher to guardians and possible participants. In this regard, I was most grateful to experience co-operation that exceeded my initial expectations.

While I (as researcher) endeavoured at all times to display sensitivity and cause the very least disruption to the school, its programme, or the lives of the participants, it goes without saying that I was deeply thankful for the contributions of all involved with this study. In the spirit of reciprocity, I consulted a variety of school documents to ensure that the information I provided on the school itself was accurate and authentic. I also constantly returned to my youthful interviewees to verify and check on what had been said and to clarify viewpoints when there remained some confusion.

Respect and appreciation was shown in the sharing of my findings with learners. As such, I came to the conclusion that the ethical principle of reciprocity was fundamental to any research process.

2.4 The role and influence of the research site

2.4.1 School ethos and culture

Given the contentious and sensitive nature of the thesis topic, namely ‘discipline’, it was unavoidable that the school ethos, culture, and approach would be seen as playing a fundamental role in how discipline was understood and lived at the research site.

Indeed, each school is quite unique in the ways it creates an ambience and environment to shape the behaviours and thinking of school participants. This ethos acts as the glue through which the interactions, developments, and responses of those at that school are formed and

held together. School cultures are thus characterised by particular webs of rituals and traditions, norms and values and preferences that affect every aspect of school life and these influence what is given attention at particular schools, and what goals are pursued (Deal and Petersen, 2009). Moreover, as different schools leave particular and quite different imprints on learner identities, these ‘school cultures’ could be regarded as both productive and destructive.

For this reason, my starting position for the thesis was that in order to comprehend the nature and understanding of ‘discipline’ at the school, I needed to factor in the school’s architecture, symbols, artefacts, the look and behaviour of adults and learners at the school, and the kinds of actions that were preferred within its environs (Ortner 2003: 105).

As such, I needed to identify at the very beginning of the study those key characteristics and outlooks that defined the approach of Avondale High School to discipline and order, and utilise these framings to shape my research questions, approach, and analysis. In this respect, the link made between good academic results and learner discipline and order was identified early on as probably the school’s most defining outlook.

This endeavour, to always be organised and structured, was in no small measure inscribed into the ways in which learners generally dressed and behaved in the more public spaces of the school. I remain impressed by female learners readily wearing skirts that touch their kneecaps, male learners wearing ties and blazers even at the hottest of times, and learners generally presenting themselves in respectful and ordered ways and always displaying only the very best behaviour to visitors and guests.

Also, I discovered that the overall aura of organisation, efficiency and order at Avondale High was deeply intentional, driven by the view that ‘habits of mind’ and ‘open-minded attitudes to learning’ needed to be inculcated and formulated in particular kinds of environments (Claxton & Lucas 2009: 10) - which then seemingly culminated in practices that ensured that learners learnt, behaved, took action, and understood their worlds in particular ways.

These practices were further manifested within the school in the ways in which educators were also regulated according to a specified dress code for men and women and being held to their profession’s code of conduct. In fact, until 2005 the school had a policy whereby educators had to teach their daily classes robed in academic gowns.

From the above, it was thus clear that the school's *setting and culture itself* was a tool through which I needed to contextualise learner experiences and lived realities. It was thus required to engage with the *history* of the school and ascertain some educator views to come to a better understanding of how learners at Avondale High related to and addressed issues of discipline at the school.

2.4.2 Historical development of Avondale High School

In terms of developing a profile for the school, I found to my amazement at the beginning of the project that three founder members of the school were available for informal discussions and that the school still retained a significant amount of original documentation about its establishment. This recorded that the school had been established in January 1977 at the behest of 4 local neighbourhood associations in the northern suburbs of Cape Town for a presumed intake of 750 white learners.

The school was named after an energetic and politically vigilant Scottish immigrant, who avidly fought for the freedom of the press in Scotland and lauded the strong work ethic in his home country of Scotland. He came to South Africa in 1824 and started an academy for the education of settler children with the idea that the values of individual freedom and diligence needed to be protected and upheld.

The first headmaster of Avondale High School was a Mr C.F. du Plessis, who was ably supported by a single deputy, Mr P.M. Charles. Their approach at inception was to develop the school into a strong academic facility by focusing on the provision of a select number of academic subjects and only a few extra-mural activities and at the school. Founding member, Mr Charles, described the process as:

When you are appointed to a new school, it is an adventure - to build up this project becomes part of your life. When we founded the school, we had to decide whether it was going to be a modern school or a traditional school and we decided that all the good schools followed traditional teaching methods, so we decided to build the school on traditional values. (Discussion 3: 2)

He further noted that:

Choosing a traditional school was quite a deliberate choice: Mr Du Plessis and I sat during the previous holiday - Mr Du Plessis had also taught at Westerford, where I had taught, and at SACS. We asked ourselves if we were going to have a "SACS" or a "Westerford" and I said that we definitely had to go for a traditional school because those schools have good names. (Discussion 3: 2)

In the period after 1977, the school focused on attracting strong academic learners from its feeder community of English speaking parents, who were mainly professionals with largely

middle class roots. This, argued the founding members, would place emphasis on academic ability and excellence and strong competition for available places in the school would be the result. Mr Charles reflected that:

We had defined our “feeder area” quite clearly, and we mostly confined ourselves to that area. But any other candidate who was an “A” or a “B” candidate, thus purely on merit, was accepted. We were in a position to select, because most of the “A” candidates in the area came to us; also a lot of good pupils from areas further afield and from areas served by other schools preferred to come to us. (Discussion 3: 3)

A further reason for the continued focus on academic excellence at the school was the appointment in the 1980s of Mr Charles as headmaster of Avondale High, upon the retirement of Mr Du Plessis. Indeed, the longevity of a particular school ethos and culture was mainly secured during the school’s 35-year existence through the appointment of only three headmasters. In that time, the school’s target audience remained a traditionally liberal English speaking, and mainly white middle class community, arguably committed to an ethos of personal discipline and academic excellence.

2.4.3 Political and demographic change

The retirement of Mr Charles in 2003, and the subsequent appointment of Mr G Illsley, did pave the way for a number of subsequent changes. While the continued goal was to focus on educating learners who achieved good academic results, the school began to diversify the school population and provided access to a wider community of learners. A consequence of this, according to a founding member, was:

It was becoming harder and harder to maintain the standards that we’d had in the past, although everyone that came here still left with a Matric certificate. (Discussion 1: 4)

Notwithstanding a supposed ‘uncertain future’, as a fairly privileged school in terms of monetary and physical resources (with large sports fields and 28 smart boards in use), the school’s overall attention on academic prowess has remained fixed - with at least 10 percent of matriculants achieving A-passes, an average of 80% achieving ‘Bachelor’ passes, and the pass rate hovering between 99 and 100% throughout the 10-year period.

With regard to these levels of academic achievement, one of the founder members suggested that maintaining previous levels would be difficult. He suggested that as learner demographics further changed, and as social challenges entered the current school system, that Avondale High would need to turn to disciplinary and other interventions and the development of further support structures to uphold its reputation:

No school can maintain the same level of academic standards, really, under the present system, as far as I can see. Therefore, I'd say that our school would always be (despite the changed policies leading to lowering of standards) *better* than all other schools in the area. (Discussion 2: 5)

School practitioners argued that even though learners of different races brought a wholly different set of dynamics into the school, that ultimately such learners came there for the same goal as all other learners before - namely to succeed academically. Notwithstanding the variety of challenges and contradictions that are bound up in growing up in a 21st century environment, youth are fully aware of what they need to do and challenges they can expect to confront if they are to succeed, as noted by Evans (2006: 11):

After all, what is distinctive about contemporary capitalism is the way that we are united by our desire for the good things in life and we are only differentiated on the basis of our ability to afford them.

At Avondale High School, the singular focus on the most appropriate ways to pursue and harness good academic development was seen to be firmly tied to the provision of a highly disciplined environment, which was protected and upheld by rigid set of rules and guidelines and learners were encouraged to adhere to these. It was argued that such an environment guaranteed academic success at the school that would then lead to gainful and lucrative employment. As another founder member noted:

I do not think that the needs of the community have changed. The school is still there to ensure the highest possible academic and behavioural standards. I do not think any school *has to* change, although there is much pressure to do so, but they have to stick to the basic values. In the end, the work must still be done, the behaviour must be good and the learners must be neatly dressed. If the school sticks to these values, a good standard will always be maintained. (Discussion 1: 5)

This opinion was expanded upon by another:

If I look at our Matric results; if I look at how well our learners still dress and behave compared to other schools, then I know we are on the right track, especially - and this is heart-warming to me - when they are *asked* to behave properly and they do. They never let us down. They rise to the occasion. No, I really think that we still remain very successful. (Discussion 2: 3)

Given the above, it should not be surprising that large numbers of learners from across the socio- economic and cultural spectrum apply every year to gain access to the school. Thus, whereas learners in the past may have predominantly been middle class, an increasing number of learners whose parents struggle economically now attend the school. Despite this tendency, as Evans (2006: 2) states that:

Young people's expectations, employment opportunities, and chances of self-fulfilment continue to be largely governed by their parents' achievements.

In conjunction, an educator at the school conceded that the most significant marker that indicated academic success of learners seemed to remain the class of their parents:

"First of all, when we opened, most of the pupils came from the immediate area which was a working class area. But we had some really excellent learners from professional families coming from across the highway, and this helped. As the school grew, most of the school's pupils started coming from areas on the northern side of the national road. This led to us getting stronger results and parents began sending their children to our school for our 'traditional' education. Later on, most of the parents had probably been to tertiary institutions themselves or had been educated at traditional schools like ours, so they preferred to drive across the national road to bring their children. That strengthened the school and its development.

But I can imagine that less qualified people are now in the position to buy houses in our feeder area and I can imagine that it will impact on the academic performance of the school, especially if the parents of our learners now represent the working class. But it is part of South Africa today and we must adjust to that. These changes are taking place in all schools - unless of course you are sent to a private school. (Discussion 4: 2)

Another teacher agreed:

Yes, I think that the cheaper houses that can be bought in our feeder area impacts on our intake. Our learners are not better: I think the "tail" has become much longer and will start becoming a problem. (Discussion 5: 1).

Such understandings of social position and class had an undeniable influence on the attitudes of both educators and learners towards academic achievement. It was often assumed that learners from working class backgrounds, who lived on the southern side of the national road were the non-achievers (though it was conceded that some did achieve despite this), while those that lived in the more affluent areas tended to be those with 'academic ambition'. I was told that:

Of course there is a great divide in this area (particularly what I refer to as the "lower area and the better streets") and I have I have known this for all my life. Poorer people, battling, not very academic, and yet some of our stars have come from "down there". But technically, the national road is seen as the dividing line..." (Discussion 1: 4).

In addition, as is evident from the above, these kinds of understandings came to live within in the operations and assumptions of those at the school in such fundamental ways that it often went undetected and unacknowledged. For the study, I had to factor into my research process and thinking the quite concrete ways in which the school ethos and culture created a particular environment within which discipline could be lived and understood.

Similarly, who the learners were (and specifically those who volunteered to partake in the study) needed to be captured very early on in the project in order for the collected data to be meaningful and have value. In the section below, I provide profiles for each of the learners that were interviewed as part of this research.

I assert that knowing a bit more here about each of the learners not only offered an unique insight into their subsequent remarks and viewpoints later in the thesis, but explained why they agreed to partake, offering their different insights into some of the incongruous issues that surrounded the distinctive notion of ‘discipline’ at Avondale High.

2.5 *Complex living and subjective understandings*

2.5.1 Seeking the participation of learners

It should be no surprise to the reader that the cohort of participants interviewed in this project was made up of only Grade 9-learners. In schools across South Africa, learners in this grade seem to find the most difficulty with authority and structure. Thus, when I asked permission from the school to conduct the study, the principal and governing body suggested that I concentrate on learners in this grade. In fact, in subsequent discussions, Mr Manser (the Head of Discipline) further suggested I focus on learners in classes in Grade 9 who displayed the most problems with authority.

My response was that focussing on Grade 9s would provide for a particular story of youth understandings of discipline, given the large body of literature, which highlighted the age of 14–16 years as formative and difficult times in the lives of the youth. In my project, I did not want to be waylaid by exploring in more detail this particular international phenomenon. Furthermore, I was concerned that focussing on learners who had already been identified and earmarked as “*problem kids*” in the school (Wilens *et al* 2002; Yu *et al* 2003; as referred to by Mackenzie 2007: 5) would not capture the kinds of contradiction that I imagined would exist within the understandings of discipline among the more general population of school learners.

Thus, despite school management encouraging me to concentrate on the ‘problem learners’ within the Grade 9-group, I managed to convince them that drawing participants from classes that were seen as having *both* ‘well-behaved’ and ‘less well-behaved’ learners would result in a balanced and representative study. Thereafter, I concentrated on the learners in two (of six) Grade 9-classes (all of whom were 15 or 16 years old at the time), seeking their parents’

consent and their assent to participate in filling in the questionnaire, which was concerned with the issue of ‘discipline’ at the school.

The first research sample for the questionnaires can thus be described as purposive and non-random. I also wanted to provide the learners, right at the outset, with a sense of what my project entailed, so I decided on using a rather detailed questionnaire, with 10 questions.

Importantly, for the *interview* part of the research, I wanted to encourage all learners who found interest in being part of the project to volunteer. Furthermore, I was aware that my data needed to take cognisance of an assertion within the school (and supported by disciplinary records) that it was the learners who under Apartheid would have been defined as Coloured or African, which mostly challenged the authority of the structures and the staff. As I was keen to avoid such a bias or presumption, I wanted to ensure in my interview sample that I included a variety of learner participants with regard to cultural affiliation, social class background, religion, and geographical location. In this regard, I was fortunate, as most of this project’s final group of participants came forward and asked to be part of the study. In that initial sample, there was a significant degree of diversity and difference and I did not have to ‘make any choices’ to secure a particular representation. This was also helped by three learners failing to complete the process, which would have changed the group representative dynamic.

While in the thesis I will not again address learners according to a supposedly ‘race’ category, in the profiles below I refer to some participant particulars that include use of race as a social category to highlight the diverse make-up of the 13-person interview sample. For the study, the sample included seven males and six females; six White, five Coloured, three Muslim and two African learners. This second sample of learners, selected rather more randomly than the first, can nevertheless be regarded as purposive and non-random, given that they originated from two already chosen classes, were all of a certain age, had particular views to share on a noted topic, and fitted into a particular representation that I had sought to secure.

Knowing that my study could not be generalised to represent a wider population, I remained cognisant throughout of the main focus of qualitative research, according to Lichtman *al* (2006: 220):

Qualitative research allows for the study of *individuals* in their natural settings, in order to understand and interpret their actions.

I did not try to provide an overly definitive view of the topic being explored, as I was interested in what *individuals* had to share on the particular issue of discipline at a defined school site.

2.5.2 The learner participants in interviews

Papamichael (2007: 61) has observed that the main purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of the human experience, investigated in its natural settings, in a holistic, in-depth and, not linear, but inductive way.

In my effort to portray a little of how discipline at Avondale High intersected and informed the lives and understandings of participating learners, I provide below brief insights and descriptions of each of the 13 learners. All the participants below have been given pseudonyms, though I have sought through the chosen names, to still reflect particular aspects of their unique identities.

I position these profiles here in the methodological chapter to introduce to the reader the broader and unique background details of each learner-identity, so that their views can be better contextualised by the reader when these are raised later in various parts of the thesis. In addition, I provide through these inserts a quick take of each of the learners' standpoints on discipline at Avondale High School to whet the reader's appetite regarding the various dimensions of the discipline issue at hand.

Fawwas

Fawwas is a male Muslim learner that comes from an affluent background and lives with his parents in an area very close to the school. Both parents are professionals and have high expectations that he will succeed academically at school. While he regards himself as "not a robot" (Questionnaire 1:2) and that he is "someone with brains" (Questionnaire 1: 3), Fawwas is generally regarded as a difficult student who has received multiple Saturday detentions, weekly detentions and prefects' detentions. He has been chased out of class and has been given numerous punishments of 'writing out'. However, Fawwas felt that his problem with discipline at school was not about breaking the rules but rather about being controlled and 'put in prison'. He noted that:

Yes, discipline is to let learners know that they must have respect for their elders, but it's not there to make me feel as if I'm in a prison. Us, the younger generation need to be let out and have fun, because school is not just about working hard. It's a stage of growing up and that's why all these discipline things happen at this school. The headmaster just does not see that, and that's the reason why. (Questionnaire 1:3)

Marc

Marc lives in an area of the local suburb that other learners regard as ‘larnie’ and inhabited by ‘wealthy, white families’. He is articulate, maturely confident and exudes intelligence. He is already being spoken of as the “future head boy”. By his own admission, he is not a “goody two-shoes” and has been ‘punished’ on a number of occasions, specifically having to do writing out and being given a prefect’s detention.

Marc claims that ‘undisciplined behaviour’ is most often simply a ‘cry for attention’ and evidence of the boredom that they as learners sometimes have to endure. He noted that in most cases learners who were being disruptive were unfairly punished, when in fact discipline needed to be positive and lead to positive outcomes. Marc described his parents as extremely supportive, both to his studies and his growing up as a youth:

We are young adults who are not as afraid of authority now-a-days and will protest against disciplinary action. Young people also don’t see discipline as such a serious subject anymore, as all it does is waste your time. We should be given more freedom in how we want to study and when we want to do our homework. We should have the freedom to choose. (Questionnaire 2: 3)

Steven

Steven has a good academic record at the school, and aspires to be very successful when he reaches adulthood. His parents would have been described in the past as coming from a ‘very respectable Coloured middle class’ background.

Yet, Steven has one of the worst disciplinary records at Avondale High School. He is renowned amongst educators as being a ‘habitual transgressor’ and has gone through the whole gamut of available punishments at the school, culminating in suspension on two occasions. He noted that he had a generally unsavoury reputation at school and that fellow learners often thought of him as rude, loud, and raucous. When questioned on this self-description, Steven pointed to the fact that his poor behaviour was probably the single characteristic that set him apart from other learners and he regarded this in a very positive way:

But I also think the ‘label’ of being naughty makes me interesting. Because I’m naughty, I’m fun to be with. The kids laugh at the things I do - all the time. It looks like they find the fact that I disregard the rules amusing and fun. You can say it’s kind of “cool”, like all the children come up to me and ask what happened and they talk to me about this and that. I’m a talking point, and the teachers give me a bit of a reputation in class – they do, all the time. At school we misbehave to fit in with friends or to be ‘Mr Cool’. Maybe we are naughty because of a lack of discipline at home? (Interview 9: 2 - 3)

Even more strikingly, Steven seemed fully aware of the serious nature of his transgressions. He reasoned that ‘even suspension is not that bad’ as it demonstrated how he had been able to manoeuvre himself *around* the structures of discipline:

I really don’t take things seriously, (laughs) and if I’m told like, “You’re going to get into trouble. This is going to happen to you when you’re punished,” I go like, “OK, whatever.” And then I just forget about it.

I think that’s because, basically, I’m not well disciplined ... yet. Every time when a teacher talks to be about being naughty and threatens me, my mind just goes somewhere else and I just think of other things while she is talking to me. It’s not deliberate; it just happens. I also think it’s because the teachers talk too much and about none of those things ever really come true. So I just switch off, because it’s not fun and none of those things, even if they do happen, are so terrible anyway.

My life is really not difficult! Since Grade 8, I have worked out a special way to find my way around in this school. (Laughs loudly). (Extracts: Interview 9: 1 – 2)

Taking all of the above into account, the reader will understand that I was surprised when Steven volunteered to be part of this study. Educators had warned me about him and I expected to interview a boastful and quarrelsome young learner. Instead, speaking to him was one of the highlights of my interview process. In our conversations he offered an unexpectedly mature and serious side of himself.

Steven suggested, for example, that if discipline was to have a positive effect, adults has to learn to *interact* with teenagers and should *discuss* issues of discipline in a non-aggressive and non-combative way. Furthermore, he noted that adults should stop blaming ‘*the neighbourhood*’, as it was often the *lack* of social interaction that led to youth doing ‘other things’:

In my area there is not a lot of noise that goes on there. It’s a quiet area and I think in other areas, especially the poor areas, where there’s loud music playing or something happening in the street and parents pay attention to you. (Interview 9: 1)

With regard to the lack of communication with adults around him, Steven observed that:

A few decades ago, you guys didn’t have what we have today, like cell phones and game consoles and all that stuff. I think it brings about a lack of communication between us and the grown ups. I don’t think, many years ago, there was such a big gap between the generations. But even the generation gap today is different – and it’s not only because of technology. It could also involve school: if a child’s too busy with school and his friends and that stuff, then there also might be a lack of communication. Parents can also be too busy and then they don’t have time for their children; they don’t help them with their homework if they need help because the parents are not there. (Interview 9: 1)

Leigh-Ann

Leigh-Ann is a quite beautiful, quiet, and unassuming female learner. At face value, though, she gives people the impression of being out-of-sorts, angry and morose. She comes from a social background that she describes to be a middle-to-lower class area on the “wrong side” of the national road. She lives with her divorced mother, who was categorised under Apartheid as Coloured.

In her interview, Leigh-Ann was very forthcoming on what she described to be her rather “old-fashioned views”. For her, educators needed to ‘take no prisoners’ and mete out and enforce discipline harshly. She asserted that learners misbehave mainly because adults allow them to get away with their actions and were ‘way too’ lackadaisical when it came to discipline:

If parents aren’t going to discipline learners at home, then the school is going to have to. Children need to know who the adult is and who the child is. But today the word *discipline* means nothing. Children want to grow up so fast and make their own rules. Discipline doesn’t affect people anymore; they just see it as another thing. If it affected them, there would have been less crime and more respectful young people. (Questionnaire 5: 3)

Esihle

Esihle is a vivacious and popular sports-crazy female learner, who has captained her Netball team in various age groups. Her parents are what is described in public spaces as members of the burgeoning African middle class, and they have high expectations of their daughter. On match days, Esihle would be fully supported by her mother and family, who also make every effort to support her at school. Esihle described her life in the following way:

Where I live, it’s more of a quiet and settled area; children are walking around in the street (but I’m not allowed to!), and people are not selling stuff like drugs; so it’s very different from some other areas.

But there are also poorer areas where I live, where you can be unsafe. There most people will feel threatened: people disguised as vegetable sellers sell drugs. My mom also says this brings down the value of the houses and so the area will just become worse and worse, with little shops.

So, yes, the young people are different in this area. Other children; at their schools their skirts are short and their teachers let them do almost anything they want to at breaks and they don’t control them properly. You can say that the children - boyfriends and girlfriends - will kiss at breaks and hold hands. But here, the children are more controlled because are things are different (laughs) and public affection is not allowed.

Also, in poor areas, the area at the school is not maintained and there are large holes in the fences. That enables the learners to go outside at breaks to go to their own

places and then come back after break. Here we have more protection, because the school area is better maintained and we are better controlled. The school and the area actually reflect each other. (Interview 6: 1)

Esihle's attitude to discipline was one of "live-and-let-live". She felt that adults and learners needed to come to a common understanding of how to 'live' with discipline. In that way, discipline can become a process:

We get punished if what we did was wrong. Teachers and other people help us to stay on the right path and help us to know what we did was wrong. (Questionnaire 6: 1)

While Esihle would not be seen as an uncontrollable or disobedient learner, she has received school punishment on a few occasions (writing out and prefects' detention). She observed that discipline at Avondale was perhaps "too strict" and that learners mostly transgressed because they were bored, wanted to "laugh a bit" and check if educators were paying attention. "Some teachers must lighten up a bit", she noted and "realise that there is a big difference between wanting to have some fun" and "smoking dagga, vandalising school property and selling drugs"(Questionnaire 6:3).

Chantelle

Chantelle is a well-behaved, kind-hearted, and charming female learner. She comes from a predominantly working-class area on the 'wrong side' of the highway and would have been described under Apartheid as 'poor white'. She described her upbringing as follows:

In the area that I come from, the young people show far less discipline. The learners at our school – most of them – are different to other kids because of the discipline at our school. But some of the kids here at our school bring their manners from their homes and then they don't obey the rules here at school and that's when the trouble starts. At school there are restrictions, for example no smoking or drinking or drugs, and those restrictions aren't at the homes of many. (Interview 13: 2)

Chantelle supported the upholding of disciplinary mechanisms at Avondale and felt that, despite "learners not always being obedient"; the school did well in terms of discipline. However, she observed that too many small indiscretions were recorded in the school's records, and that she did not regard herself as a "goody-goody", because of her penalties for passing notes to friends or talking in class.

With regard to overall discipline, Chantelle described the rules and the transgression thereof in the following way:

If they don't like the teacher, as the teacher is always picking on them, they will be naughty. They also look for attention, like sometimes they would say it's boring and then they would do something that's 'funny' for entertainment.

Sometimes it's not only about being naughty or wanting to be 'cool', it's also the background. Sometimes learners' parents wouldn't care about the child, that's why they do what they do and try getting attention. It could also be peer pressure or the group telling you you're 'chicken'. (Questionnaire 13: 2 - 3)

Garth

Female learners at the school describe Garth as a school "jock" who is tall, handsome, and "cute". He is hugely popular and does well in sport and academics. He regards self-discipline and disciplined behaviour as key to his life approach. Brought up in a traditional white family, Garth believes in firmly sticking to the rules and has only once been punished by receiving writing out for a small indiscretion.

I had forgotten to do my homework and I deserve what I got, because I didn't follow the teacher's instructions. (Questionnaire 3: 2)

Garth comes from a middle-class, affluent social background and lives on what is deemed to be the 'right side' of the highway. Having noted this, he observed that:

Nowadays, the world is nearly the same for everybody everywhere. In South Africa, we experience the same things as people from other places: technology again: cell phones, music – the music here is the same as the music in America – I'm talking about globalisation. I'm part of that group, to a certain extent I'm like everybody else. (Interview 3: 1)

Kevin

Kevin is of mixed heritage and struggles academically. He lives in a working-class area on the "wrong side of the road" below the school and describes his life in the following way:

It's our area, you know, Ma'am. Sometimes things go wrong, like if you start fighting with your next-door neighbour... Like when your neighbour has a dog and he says his dog is the strongest. One day, I took my dog over to his dog and they attacked each other - sometimes, it's like a competition there where I live.

Where I live, everyone listens to the same type of music that I listen to, except for our next-door neighbour. When we listen to music, he will pull his car out and play loud music from his car! And it's Afrikaans music, Ma'am. We don't like it, and we keep on telling him to put it off and that we are not competing with him. (Interview 11: 1 – 2)

Kevin has a long list of indiscretions on his school disciplinary record, from the least serious to suspension from school. Many of the learners - and a few educators – are apprehensive of Kevin, as he is understood to be physically aggressive. However, in his interview Kevin noted that no matter what people thought of him, "every person has a role model who encourages him" (Questionnaire 11: 3). In his case, he described his mother as having the

most influence on his life, as she demanded respect and always expected him to show good manners. This was quite contrary to his father's influence on him:

In primary school, I used to fight all the time over stupid things. I didn't even go and talk first; I just went in fighting. My father's like that as well and when he starts fighting, he doesn't stop. You might not believe it, but I've calmed down a lot here at Avondale High. (Interview 11: 2)

In the interview, it was surprising to hear Kevin describe Avondale High as "having little discipline and that "the discipline in this school has not been found yet" (Questionnaire 11: 3). According to him, the senior management structures did not want to see to which extent the senior learners "got away with murder" and that discipline was not about being "right", but what was acceptable to staff responsible for this:

The Matrics are at the top of the food chain. Because the other learners in the school watch what the Matrics do, they think it is OK for them to do (naughty things). They think they can do it and not get into trouble. (Questionnaire 11: 3)

Kevin argued that this did not set a good example for the younger ones and, as "people are not disciplined by themselves" (Questionnaire 11:3), problems were caused:

When Michael and I are together, there is always trouble, but when Steven is with us there's *big* trouble. Like if we are sitting next to the road and a car will pass and the tyre will pop or make a loud noise, everyone will come out and look at us straight away.

One day we and come back after a holiday and someone came knocking on our door and said, "Your child threw my window out!" But I wasn't even there – the more my father explained that we had been away on holiday, the more they even said that they had seen me doing it. It's like I'm a magnet for trouble. (Interview 11: 2)

Kevin noted that to be "one of the guys", he needed to conform to the actions of the group, and acknowledged that he was quite happy with this:

At school, the first impression that people get of me is that of a naughty person, and that I'm always looking to do something wrong. Whenever there's trouble, it's always me and Michael that are together. When Mr Manser calls over the intercom, our names are always read together. Whenever the two of us are together, something is going to happen. Even the prefects will follow us, because they know there will be 'double trouble'. (Laughs.) (Interview 11: 2 - 3)

He conceded, however, that his reputation was not helpful for his schooling and that he would do anything to "wipe the slate clean". He was also well aware that his loyalty to the group was probably misguided and said:

Yes, I do, I've said that I want to start with a clean slate, that I want to improve next year. At the moment, all the teachers are telling me that I'm on thin ice because of my naughtiness and the naughty friends that I'm with. Even my mother says, "Choose your friends wisely. You're not the type of person that will bring others in trouble and

you won't tell. But, when they're in trouble, the first one they will bring up is you." And I've learnt that it's true. (Interview 11: 5)

Matthew

In my initial meeting with Matthew, I thought of him as having a sharp mind, but that he was sullen and petulant. He resides with his parents in an upper-to-middle class area in proximity to the school, on the 'right' side of the highway. Under Apartheid, the family would have been described as well-off Whites.

In my interview with Matthew, he provided well taught-through, voluble, and provocative insights that suggested a most mature, 'adult' approach to life. Widely regarded by educators as intellectually gifted, Matthew is also regarded as an extremely 'difficult' learner.

Although most offences that Matthew had committed were of a less serious nature (he has never been suspended), he has a long record of various levels of detentions and has also had to do much writing out. In my meeting with him, he noted that he has been in trouble so often that his parents had even resorted to the physical and that he had lost their trust.

From his answers, it is apparent that Matthew regards adults and the youth as living in two different worlds and that consequent misunderstandings result in various forms of punishment being meted out. He defines *discipline* as follows:

It is when adults judge our behaviour or actions according to how they see things and then they punish us. It is supposedly for the 'long-term benefit' of children. It is extremely hypocritical. (Questionnaire 4: 1)

Matthew observed that adults were rarely fair and that was what he resented about being disciplined:

Young people don't like people telling them what to do. In this category, Avondale is the worst school in the world! They force us to do so many things (even to do sport and to attend functions) that I cannot imagine how the learners will be able to choose for themselves in the wide world. Many teachers don't know how to handle problems or solve issues, so they resort to the textbook answer: writing out. They never consult the learner. They treat us like sheep; like criminals that don't deserve respect.

Children here are so bereft of freedom that they feel like others are controlling their lives. Praise for even the smallest, but significant, achievement is overlooked, but scorn for the least mistake is given swiftly. How should we bear discipline now-a-days, in these changing times, when adults don't remember to balance the equation of discipline and praise? (Questionnaire 4: 3)

Adrian

Adrian was one of the younger learners in the group. He lives with his parents in a middle-to-upper class area close to the school. Others describe him as an academic, or a 'nerd', as he

typically wears spectacles and carries a book with him at all times. He even reads while walking down passages between lessons. He excels academically to the extent of being in the Top Twenty in the grade. Ironically, he is regarded as an ‘outsider’ by most learners and is visibly uncomfortable with his peers. He was so self-conscious during our interview also that it took ten minutes for him to settle.

It came as somewhat of a surprise when Adrian informed me that he once had been given a Grade Head detention. At Avondale high, this is seen as one of the more serious forms of punishment and the offence is documented in the learner’s disciplinary record:

Although I don’t think my Grade Head punishment was completely justified, it was also justified as I should have listened. I was punished for coming to school late without a letter of excuse. I came late because I misunderstood that it was a ‘civvies’ day and had to go home to change. There was no time to provide a letter, so I was given a Grade Head detention. (Questionnaire 7: 2)

This punishment led to Adrian seriously questioning the nature and effectiveness of punishment and discipline at Avondale High School. Whereas he previously believed that learners needed to be punished regularly to deter them from ‘committing offences’, he now also saw the random nature of discipline and the effects the consequent punishment had on learners. Adrian noted that many discipline problems stemmed from punishment becoming synonymous with boredom (not pain or discomfort) and learners who were “naturally rebellious as teenagers”. (Questionnaire 7: 2)

Adrian, however, argued that punishment needed to be painful or feared if it were to work. He claimed that caning needed to be re-instated in a controlled, non-abusive way, because discipline in his opinion “brought the person out of his comfort zone”. For Adrian, disciplinary rules also needed to be changed every few years, as “people are afraid of the unknown” and would then have to think about what discipline meant (Questionnaire 7: 3).

In the end, Adrian equated *discipline* with “self-control” which was “something everyone possesses, even in some small way” (Questionnaire 7:1).

Anurah

Anurah is a lovely, quiet, and polite Muslim learner. According to her, however, she has an innate rebelliousness that just boils over when she feels ‘hard done by’. In particular, she regularly challenges the authority of the female prefects and consequently is deemed a habitual defaulter. She noted in the interview that she has already received 4 Grade Head detentions and has been given “at least 15 Prefect Detentions” (Questionnaire 10: 2).

Anurah noted that she hated being accused of doing “something wrong” if she knows that she did not. She thinks of herself as mostly being treated unfairly and that she is generally well-behaved. From discussions with Anurah, it would seem that many of her concerns lie in the way she is perceived within her family:

I think it’s because usually I’m good; so then everybody explodes once I do something wrong. My daddy says he doesn’t care about that any more. Compared to my sister - she’s a straight A-student - and I’m not, so my daddy doesn’t expect much from me. (Interview 10: 1)

At school, Anurah thus deliberately challenges authority by testing all the rules that normally lead to detentions, namely wearing too much lip gloss, chewing straws while walking in line, wearing incorrect Alice-bands in her hair and constantly back chatting prefects and educators.

Anurah describes her home life in ways that make her question what adults tell her:

In our area - it’s a really good area - you don’t find kids in the street and stuff. The youth here is seen as “brats”; as spoilt rich kids. I know they say that the kids in other poor areas are supposed to be different, they don’t speak like us, like smart and stuff.

My area is different. It may be because there’s more money. My mommy doesn’t like me to be out of the house a lot, so that I’m not exposed to drugs and things a lot. She doesn’t trust me - she doesn’t trust the other kids that I will be around with if I go out. My daddy doesn’t spoil us at all. I don’t even have a cell phone - I’m the only girl in my class that doesn’t have a phone.

I’m not allowed to go out, like to parties and stuff. So, I stay at home and I like reading.

I’m supposed to be this *weird person*. I don’t feel very uncomfortable with being called a “weird person” – sometimes I quite like it... Sometimes I’m OK with the discipline my parents impose on me at home, but I also feel as if I’m trapped in the house.

I also feel trapped by the discipline at our school. Every time somebody makes a noise in the class, Mr Laubscher says it was me talking; and in Ms Ajmoodien’s class, I just wrote my name on the desk and she made this whole big thing and she phoned my parents and everything! But I just did what everyone else also does and then it’s only me that gets into trouble.

So, Ma’am, I think this feeling of being trapped will make me unique. Other kids get to go places and they don’t get into trouble at school for the smallest little thing. Maybe their lives are better and they have more fun? (Extracts - Interview 10: 1- 2)

Nomathembi

Nomathembi is delightfully engaging and energetic. She lives in an area quite far away from the school, but boards with a family close to the school. She returns to her parents’ home only on weekends or during holidays. In our interview, she described her parents as living in one of the poor African townships of Cape Town (Interview 8: 1). Because she boards close to

the school, Nomathembi participates fully in the extra-mural activities of the school, and is very proud of singing in the prestigious Avondale High Choir.

Nomathembi regards herself as a well-behaved and easy-going learner. She is well respected by educators and peers. She interprets discipline as “knowing where to draw the line” and expects learners to understand that they should know the difference “between their friends and their teachers”. Her stance is that “educators must always be treated with utmost respect.” (Questionnaire 8: 1). She links her upbringing at home and her behaviour at school and says:

Young people of today base their lives and decisions on friends and, yes, what they say is true: discipline starts at home. If you are used to having your way at home, then you will want to have it your way anywhere you go. Another thing- besides wanting to impress your friends - is to think that getting into trouble 24/7 is going to make me cool and maybe I'll be feared at school – they don't know that they're only fooling themselves. (Questionnaire 8: 3)

Ayesha

Ayesha recently returned to South Africa after living abroad in the Middle East for seven years. She lives close to school, in one of the more affluent areas. In our interview, Ayesha displayed high levels of maturity and expressed herself in very articulated and sophisticated ways. Her communicative and linguistic skills during this project interview were impressive and quite unparalleled within the group. However, she noted that before leaving South Africa, the family had lived in an area that was decidedly less “up-market” and was actually quite dangerous, with much gang activity and many robberies.

In terms of her experiences with discipline, Ayesha observed that she had only ever received one punishment (writing out) at Avondale High and felt it quite undeserved. She reasoned, though, that protesting her innocence would be regarded as being disrespectful and thus had simply accepted the punishment. However, the incident had made her realise that many of the rules at the school were overly petty and unfair, though there were also “many that are necessary”.

When engaging with questions about learners, Ayesha constantly spoke using an inclusive “us” and “we”, and noted that discipline needed to be of a communicative nature and a collaborative process between parties of equal influence:

I think disciplining young people should be done with reason. Be calm, because as soon as you shout, our minds tell us we should ‘fight’ back. Adults need to understand we need to learn there's a time and place to stop. It also depends on your parents and how they raised you and if their reason for discipline was fair. (Questionnaire 12: 3)

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided and described the methodology and ethical principles that governed the research project and its approach.

I argued that these processes could not be readily undertaken without some consideration of the context of the school site and the attitudes and backgrounds of the participating learners. In following this logic, I showed how the school context and my engagement with the various learners informed and shaped my engagement with the study and subsequent decisions and positions with regard to the research methodology itself.

The chapters following engage with the definition and conceptualisation of key concepts and themes encountered in the thesis. It is here where learner standpoints on crucial abstractions and characterization are highlighted - which is why each of the participants has been introduced to the reader here. As such, the search for *meaning* is the underlying motivation behind the description and study of *thoughts and actions*, thus resulting in *interpretation* and *application* of knowledge” (Krauss 2005: 763).

CHAPTER 3

YOUTH, YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE: LOCATION WITHIN THE LITERATURE

It seems that we have exchanged older problems for newer ones, and if our ways of living are unquestionably better now in some ways, they are worse in others.

Burbules (1995: 2)

3.1 Introduction

In his article *The Necessity and Violence of Theory in Discourse*, Ball (2006:3) notes that the understanding of different social contexts requires the motivation and interest of researchers and the willingness of communities to be studied. In such a space, mutually implicit and explicit assumptions are initially made by both parties that shape how matters are understood (Berkhout 2007: 409). However, discourses are characterised by the deficient and imperfect nature of diction and language. Sullivan (2004: 46) holds that “not everybody understands what others are thinking or experiencing at any given time”.

Thus, when I set about this project I wondered how the terms ‘youth’, ‘youth culture’ and ‘discipline’ (and their formalised definitions) within policy were understood both in the literature and by the learner subjects themselves. I was primarily interested in understanding what Brown (cited in Maguire 2003: 46) described as the diverse strands of socially produced groupings, practices, and understandings, and the ways in which these were constantly ‘packaged’ and ‘repackaged’.

In this chapter I provide a broad overview of some of the literature on youth and discipline, and the contribution thereof to the focus of my study. More importantly, in doing so I show how the meanings of conceptual terms such as ‘youth’, ‘youth culture’ and ‘discipline’ were also understood and construed at ‘ground level’ by the participating youth in the project. (Due to the emphasis on *discipline* in this study, and the vital aspect of the *youth* talking back to the constructs thereof, the voices of the learners with regard to structures and procedures of ‘discipline’ at Avondale High are heard in Chapter 5.)

I base my inclusion of how youth make meaning in this (the present) chapter on May’s (2001: 47) caution that if researchers are to better understand the concept of youth as “social beings that emerge as a result of historical, political, and economic processes”, then the perceptions of youths about themselves and things that affect them also have to be accommodated. This was most evident in comments made by two boys in the interviews about the value of being

‘listened to’ and about how their “talking had helped them to learn at the same time” (Swartz 2010: 162). Fawwas and Matthew differently noted that:

This has been one of the few times in my life that I can actually think about things and about who I am and it’s been great fun. I like talking one-on-one and being listened to. (Interview 1:4; Interview 4:4)

As “co-constructors in who and what they become” (Goldson *et al* 2003: 23), youth play an active role in the “construction and determination of their own social lives” (May 2001: 47), and thus how they define and think of themselves - and the challenges they face - is crucially important to any analysis.

3.2. Defining ‘youth’

3.2.1 ‘Youth’: towards definition and understanding

Historically, the use of the term *youth* is a fairly modern development. According to Philippe Aries’ *Centuries of Childhood* (as in Brown, 2005: 8; Goldson *et al*, 2003: 11) discourses on childhood hardly existed before the sixteenth century (Lee 2001:32), and it is only since the Victorian age that the *cult of childhood* (as forerunner of the exploration of *youth*) has come into its own as a research focus. It is noted that *youth* as a social and cultural construct only really became evident during the period after World War II. In the aftermath of the devastation of the war the rapidly changing global social landscape and varied societal concerns needed to be understood, and the requisite social interventions had to be mapped out (McCulloch *et al* 2006: 540).

In an age of growing uncertainty, youth invariably came to be categorised according to *three* paradigms: a biological grouping, an idiosyncratic social class, and a cultural construct (Weinstein, as cited in McCulloch 2006:540). This interpretation of youth as *multi-dimensional* represented a key shift from the rigid delineation of ‘youth’ in the past. Stephenson (2007: 19) argues that, rather than being simply a biological phase, the term ‘youth’ came to be treated as a “variable concept that has been socially constructed and reconstructed.”

For one learner in my study, for example, the term ‘youth’ meant different things at different stages. This seemed to be linked to how she understood the term in relation to her contemporary South African experience. Nomathembi noted that:

I think there are two aspects to the word “youth”: I associate it with both younger people at high school and with the future leadership of our country. I think “older youth” would start at about 20, because that’s when you - as the leaders in the future -

start to get more experience. If I have to think about age, youth could be up to about 26 or so. If I look at politicians, they are more likely to develop at that stage. Interview 1: 1)

On the other hand, outside of the categories through which ‘youth’ were traditionally and historically conceptualised, the key problem for contemporary youth was often that the modern worlds that they came to live in were paradoxical in nature:

The places that they inhabited appeared to offer so much and yet insisted on leaving them (young people) on the edge (and) unsure (Miles 2000:68).

Another of the learners who partook in my study suggested that contemporary youth struggled with having more freedom (but did not know what to do much of the time) and not receiving any guidance or help from adults in making sense of ‘their new worlds’. Chantelle noted that:

The youth nowadays are not treated as strictly as the youth of a few decades ago; we are allowed much more freedom than young people of the past. The youth of today live more on the edge and are undisciplined. Some of the youth just don’t know how to behave or talk in a good manner. What they mean will come out wrong and the teacher will take that up in a different manner and it will cause an argument. It probably did also happen in the olden days, but less. Then the parents cared more and the chances were better that everybody came from a good home. Nowadays many parents just don’t worry about their children or their discipline. Yes, there are things today that make us behave worse, like cell phones, MXit and the Internet and it is so much easier to do something bad, especially if you know someone else has already done it. (Interview 13: 1)

It remained a paradox that, despite a large body of literature and scholarly work in the field of education done on young people, erudite and devoted attention had only recently been devoted to the views of the youth *per se*. Stephenson (2007:159) pointed out that “very little is known of their (youth) perceptions, despite a few small-scale qualitative studies.”

In the South African context, Ndebele, in his *Foreword* (Soudien, 2007: vii), observed in 2007 that the youth must of necessity be *engaged* as a point of entry in understanding their lives as South Africans. As such, Dolby (2001), Soudien (2007), Bray *et al* (2009), and Schwartz (2010) have provided valuable contributions in this regard, but there remains more to be done regarding the authentic description of South African youth. In the words of Soudien (2007:3):

There have been few attempts to explain who young South Africans are and what they are about. We have at our disposal a small input of writing that has been useful. This paucity and distortedness reflect the bewilderment around describing and understanding South Africa’s youth.

In their studies, the authors above remind that while many lessons can be drawn from the international experience, some sort of ideal definition that could be strived for in thinking about youth did not exist (Goldson *et al*, 2003: 11). Consequently, the importance of understanding local contexts is emphasised.

3.2.2 “Youth”: modern policy and conventions

In a modern era of cosmopolitanism and globalism there has been a growing awareness of the increasingly complicated lives of young people across the world. This consciousness has been most visibly emphasised by the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* of 1979 and the 19 subsequent UN declarations, conventions and covenants concerning youth (<file:///E:/UNQuestionsabouthyouth.htm>).

However, what this focus on the rights of youth in many countries has invariably done has been to lead to procedurally driven definitions of *youth* becoming fairly widespread. This development has meant that the formal worlds of government and the law have come to define how the processes and practices of young people within societal life have been mainly understood.

In South Africa for example, the concern about youth is reflected in the formulation of the National Youth Policy (2008–2013) (Government Gazette, 2008: 7–8) and its predisposition to no fewer than 8 legislative and policy frameworks. The focus on the needs of youth is also directly addressed in the *South African Schools Act* (1996) (<http://www.acts.co.za/ed/sasa.index.htm>) and education policy documents like the *National Curriculum Statement* (Department of Education 2003 & 2003a) and the more recent *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (Department of Basic Education 2010). Laws, policies, and the ways in which societies are legally structured and framed have invariably come to shape how the term ‘youth’ is understood; and it is often couched within a chronological age.

Underlying the different definitions of youth are quite varied framings of what age group the term ‘youth’ represents. Many believe that youth constitute a very particular age grouping; but what this is, varies. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights-overview>) for example applies to young people aged from 0-18 and the UN General Assembly defines *youth* as those between the ages of 15-24 (<file:///E:/UN Questionsabouthyouth.htm>). In South Africa, which not only has a complex past and a variety of challenges attached to what a final definition would mean for different subjects, the term ‘youth’ or ‘young people’ is often described in distinctly different ways

(and for different reasons). The National Health Policy (www.doh.gov.za/docs/policy/) defines *youth* as those aged 10-24, while the National Youth Policy (2008-2013) (Government Gazette 17 December 2008 No. 31782) refers inclusively to *young people* as those falling within the age group of 14-35. The White Paper on Social Welfare in South Africa (www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=127937) defines *youth* as those between the ages of 16-30; while for different reasons the Department of Correctional Services (www.csvr.org.za/wits/papers/papiyop.htm) defines ‘youth’ (*young offenders*) as all those falling in the age range 14-25. Even in research projects, such as that of Bray *et al* (2009:1), it was seen as fitting to define this grouping as to be between the ages of 12-24.

Ironically, other policies, procedures, and configurations further complicate a quantitative definition of youth. For example, the fact that a young person is considered an adult and a separate legal entity at the age of 18 in order to vote, obtain a driver’s license, be able to consume alcohol and make decisions independent of parental or legal guardian consent, underpins multiple and compound understandings of the concept ‘youth’.

3.2.3 ‘Youth’: fractious or fun?

While 69% of the South African population was reported to be 35 years of age and younger in 2008 (SSA, as in National Youth Policy 2008-2013: 11), the grouping *youth* should not be regarded as one homogenous or stereotypical group. There exists deep layering of how diverse youths are according to cultural, gendered, and age appropriate variables. One learner, Matthew, explained this in the following way:

Well, in a different country, the youth will be very different. But I think, in this country, mostly they are the same. Like the black and the white children here at our school: they are all very similar. Of course, each one has his own personal qualities and things, but generally speaking, we are all very similar. Yes, we don’t all listen to exactly the same music as we think, depending on our ethnicity and our backgrounds. I, as a white guy, listen to R&B. So, other children listen to what they are used to and only a few like to listen to music that’s outside of what their personal group listens to, ‘cos they want to be unique. But also ‘cos ... they just like stuff like that.

I’m quite unique. I don’t go with what everyone else goes with. I don’t want to wear rings and stuff on my face and just *act* differently. Like my music: the stereotype at this school is like, “Oh, there’s that white guy. Let’s listen to some of the rock on his phone.” And then they look at a coloured or a black person and say, “Let’s listen to his rap or R&B and stuff.” So, I am myself: I don’t judge anyone, so if I like a song, I’ll like it no matter if I’m supposed to or not. I’m quite comfortable with moving outside the expectations. (Interview 4: 1 - 2)

In this regard, it is ironic that the alternative viewpoints youths hold regarding their actions and lives are stereotyped in mostly *negative* ways. When learners think or act against the

norm, they are construed to be “a *problem*, or even as *errant* and *troublesome*” (my italics) as noted by Stephenson (2007: 4).

Van Zyl Slabbert *et al* (1994) and Brown (2005: 6) reflect that as society is bombarded with images of idle, troublesome, anti-authoritarian, subversive and even criminal teenagers by the media, it has come to be *expected* that youth “go against the grain” and that they will be deviant, disruptive, rebellious and lawless - even violent (Van Zyl Slabbert *et al* 1994: 87). This form of “othering” (Soudien 2007:4), firmly links youth to notions of ‘chaos’ and ‘estrangement’. Furthermore, the youth is seen as a constant and visible “threat to adult notions of control and power” (Brown 2005: 6; Stephenson 2007: 161).

In South Africa, given the history of the 20th century, and the various contributions the youth made against Apartheid at different times, the youth has been cast as independent, yet dangerous. This dichotomy is evident in the following description contained within the National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002 – 2007) (<http://www.youth-policy.com>):

Since the youth uprising of 1976 and the concurrent mobilisation of young women and men against apartheid policies and racial oppression, the term ‘youth’ has represented a potent and important element of the political struggle. *It has also often been used to characterise a segment of the population seen as violent, unruly, undisciplined, and/or underdeveloped* (my italics).

Negative stereotyping has continued in post-apartheid South Africa. Khumalo, in a weekly column in the *Sunday Times* (March 16, 2008) (<http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article>), commented on the “violence and mayhem in the school yards of South Africa” and wrote an 8-page article highlighting unsafe schools in 2008. The heading of this article “School ground or battle field?” speaks for itself, and it later re-appeared in a number of other publications like *De Kat* (June 2009) (<http://www.dekat.co.za>). Another article in *Die Burger* of 22 December 2010 (<http://www.jip.co.za>) highlighted a noted *increase* in violent incidents in Western Cape schools under the heading “Geweld neem toe by skole in die W-Kaap” (*Violence increases at schools in the Western Cape*). This and a host of other articles on schools and mayhem highlighted the high levels of drug abuse, bullying, lack of discipline and poor academic performance in schools as daily evidence of youth “being out of control and in crisis” (WCED Positive Behaviour Seminar, Notes on “Restorative Discipline”, 20 February 2011).

For the thesis, the above characterisations of youth as ‘problematic’ and ‘dangerous’ were heavily contested during interviews with many of the Grade 9-interviewees. They offered

alternative ways of viewing youth and resistant behaviour. Adrian, for example, noted that undisciplined behaviour was often not about challenging authority, but about ‘fitting in’.

Those difficult kids make the decision to be ‘naughty’ quite deliberately. They can choose whether they actually want to be part of this group, or they can actually say, “I don’t care about fitting in – I’m my own person.” They *can* say that, but they choose not to do this. Young people are “naughty” to be part of a group, to fit in. It is here where they try and make friends. They also think they will be... (I don’t like the word)...“cool”. Probably, on *some level*, they know they’re wrong but superficially they believe they are right. It’s like a state of mind, or maybe it’s more like a kind of inner rebellion. (Interview 7: 3)

Ayesha provided a somewhat more empathic view:

Youngsters who behave badly are after that adrenaline rush. They know they are doing something they are not supposed to do. They still keep on doing these things, like when the naughty children bring fire crackers to school, or when they run and shout in the hallway, despite knowing that it’s not allowed. I think it’s because they want that feeling of anticipation and ... excitement!

I think some children are naughty and misbehave because they know that they are not really doing something really bad or illegal. They know they won’t get *very* big or serious punishment for it. But because naughtiness has to do with some kind of excitement, an edge, its something us youngsters want to have some fun with.

We all have this perception that when you are young, you are free and you don’t have responsibilities. Your parents look after you and it’s just you and your own life. You are experiencing everything for yourself and when you are young, you tend to be very focussed on ‘me’ all the time. (Interview 12: 3)

In my study, nearly all the Grade 9-interviewees described the term ‘youth’ as having a dual character: being an age-bound category, yet displaying an ageless, carefree, and blithe nature. In the words of the fifteen-year old Chantelle, the term ‘youth’ should be understood in the following way:

Youth is when people come together, when they think the same. Everybody thinks it has to do with age, but I don’t think there has to be an age limit. It won’t be classified by your age or your race or anything else: anybody can be free to enjoy being a youth. To be part of the youth of our country, I think you must only have certain characteristics, like being fun to be with. There are many young *and* old people that are boring, so not all young people can be seen as part of “youth”. The Matrics can mostly be seen as youthful, but not really someone like my mother. Maybe being a youth has to do with your carefree behaviour. (Interview 13:1)

However, the politics of current society, together with its deeply moralising agenda, largely constructs how the meaning of ‘youth’ is configured. The youth is not only seen as a grouping that is excitable, energetic and fun loving, but in the words of France (2007: 154):

As lacking individual morality, failing to commit to good and decent middle class values, and as an overall general problem that needs to be both protected and controlled.

3.2.5 ‘Youth’: inhabiting modern, multi-dimensional worlds

What the different approaches to defining ‘youth’ above mainly highlighted was that the diverse definitions, notions, and approaches to youth came to be closely aligned to how social change happened in different contexts, at both global and local levels. Brown (2005: 4) suggests that the term ‘youth’ will only become ‘intelligible’ when it is understood how social constructs (such as class and culture) intersect with constraints of physicality (for example, age, space, and the corporeal). Lee (as cited in May 2001: 78) holds that the term ‘youth’ will continue to be poorly understood if it is not constantly reconceptualised.

Regarding South Africa, Soudien (2007: 3) emphasised that youth consciousness remained a profoundly historical condition, marked by “the time and space in which it is being experienced”. Soudien (2007: 4) further noted that in order to understand young people, it must be kept in mind that they are rooted in social structures (like family, race, ethnic and language groups, and social class), but that they relate to these structures as individuals and create their own lived identities.

Waldron, as cited in Waghid (2009:5), urges researchers always to take note of the “hybridity, fluidity and the (recognition of) fractures within human selves” in their contemplation of what construes the identities of youthful South Africans.

In the sections above I broadly sketched how the concept of ‘youth’ has been understood and defined within the literature and by some youth themselves. Given this, and the thesis engagement with changing forms and formations of ‘youth’ and the ways in which discipline is ‘lived’, I explore in the section below understandings of ‘youth culture’. I do so to depict some of the constructs through which young people negotiate, navigate and interpret the social contexts and situations in which they find themselves (Soudien 2007; Dimitriadis 2008).

3.3 *Defining ‘youth culture’*

3.3.1 ‘Youth culture’: towards definition and understanding

As the word ‘culture’ originates from the Latin ‘*cultura*’, (Kavanagh 2002: 282) which denotes the idea of ‘growing’ and subsequent *change*, I argue that the term ‘youth culture’ usefully describes the ways in which young people continually *encode* anew different

milieus, although paradoxically these highly contextualised constructions and interpretations are often both *conventional* and *contested*.

As the scope of this thesis is quite limited, I explore the *structural dominance* of social concepts like class, gender, race, and location in shaping young people's lives and objectifying their experiences, while also emphasising the importance of *agential influences* such as subjectivity, diversity and discursive relations such as language, dialogue and representation (France 2007:150).

In grappling with what 'youth culture' entails, both Wulff *et al* (1995) and France (2007) point to the groundbreaking work of Paul Willis *Learning to labour* (1977) (www.ashgate.com/isbn/9781857421705) and especially his recognition that young people internalise and transform *standard cultural practises* and in this way construct anew their *individualised 'cultures'*, albeit with many personal subjectivities.

Wulff *et al* (1995: 6) notes that the term 'youth culture' should be seen as *time-limited* but also *an active and creative construct* by which youngsters engage with their personal space through accommodation, confrontation and/or the evasion of adults. Wulff *et al* (1995) further argues that the uniqueness and temporal character of the category 'youth' helps young people make meaning of themselves and their futures in relation to everyday living, and as such, they produce different forms of living, identified in the literature as "subcultures", "neo-tribalisms", and "hybrid cultures" (France 2007: 141).

Referring to the work of Bourdieu and Giddens, Miles (2000) explains such "youth lifestyles" as constructs that usefully link the concepts of *structure* and *agency* by situating young people in 'arenas' within which they construct meaning, whilst simultaneously allowing them to make meaning of the *self*.

This idea of the 'arena' or 'place' as a key identifying factor within the processes of 'making meaning' allows youth to formulate 'youth subcultures' as modes of expression through which they articulate distinct styles and behaviours *outside of* and *in response to* dominant systems ascribed to by social institutions like family, home, school and work (Hebdige 1979). As such, "youth subcultures" become symbolic attempts to resist domination by consciously adopting behaviour that appears threatening to the establishment (Hall 1993).

In this regard, Wulff *et al* (1995: 6) describes 'youth culture' in the following way:

We advocate the view that people negotiate culture, or rather cultural processes, and are formed by them to a certain extent. When these cultural processes are formed by young people, we are dealing with youth culture.

In the South African context, a number of authors have noted that there exists little local research on the ways in which the youth frame and negotiate their lived worlds (Soudien 2007: 3; Vandeyar 2008: 286). As Swartz (2010:4) argues, the voices of South African youth remain somewhat unheard:

What seems to be absent is a study of youth that treats young people as ‘transcultural knowers’ that are capable to interpret and provide insight into society rather than only be objects of study whose values and psychological processes are investigated.

For the thesis, given the current social challenges and the ways in which past structures under Apartheid continue to fashion many current experiences, I was keen to understand how youth create new forms of living while caught up in the time-limits of both their youth (as the present) and their histories (as the past).

3.3.2 ‘Youth culture’: a temporal construct

Engaging with the concept the experiences of youth and the development of subcultures as being *limited in* and *limited by* time, I was struck by Soudien’s (2007: 11) idea that the constant generativity and accommodation shown by youth needs to continuously be juxtaposed with the “short-livedness” (Dawson 2003) of the youth experience, and the limited political moment in which they each lived. In the latter regard, Woolman (2006: 34) notes that even laws that entrench education, (in South Africa, the National Education Policy Act, the South African Schools Act and the Employment of Educators Act,) must be seen as “a variable space that expands and contracts as a result of the *political exigencies* of a given historical moment” (my italics).

The question then is: what kinds of demands influence the ways in which the youth engage with life and, consequently, how do young South Africans build such “political exigencies” into their creative processes of youth culturalisation at various times? For example, in a post-Apartheid country in which the category of race continues nevertheless to be “a primary point of reference” (Soudien 2007; Vandeyar 2008: 287) and the legacy of Apartheid continue to leave its indelible mark on the previously disadvantaged through escalating societal inequities (Dolby 2000; Woolman 2006: 31; Lancaster 2008), youth have struggled to break free from the ‘historical shape’ of their daily experiences. In many cases, this past construct has provided a significant *limit* to how they view or understand their futures.

The above historical and racial boundaries being pointed out, it must simultaneously be noted that the concept of *race* has become somewhat of a ‘shifting ground’, which has led to its reconfiguration by youth through a “discourse of taste” (Dolby 2001: 114). In the same vein, Posel (2001: 53) points out that this “reconfiguration of race” and the integration of schools “has loosened the fixity and closure of Apartheid-defined worlds of experience”.

Swartz (2010: 60), in her book *iKasi: the moral ecology of South Africa’s township youth*, expresses surprise at the (unexpected) extent of this ‘loosening’. She notes that when interviewed youth were asked about key influences on their lives, more than half of the youth excluded Apartheid. The author states (Swartz 2010: 132):

What remained absent was a pervasive critical consciousness by the majority of young people - an understanding of how their current problems had structural causes and origins in blatant injustices. Most tacitly refused to identify themselves as victims of injustice, telling me instead that Apartheid had not affected them personally.

Swartz (2010: 130) attributes this mind-set to youth not wanting to live their lives in the past, with one of her interviewees even noting that “Apartheid was becoming an excuse”.

One of the learners in my study, Ayesha, voiced a similar view:

In this country, a lot of people want to prove that what happened here with Apartheid was wrong; and not just in this country but all over the world. Their behaviour is a reaction to being stereotyped and they want to show everybody that that’s not true. Some want to prove themselves, but then they go a bit overboard. They forget where they are and what they were trying to do in the first place. It’s only *some* people that act out because of race, but then they will affect everybody around them. Everyone around such a person will be very cautious and will be scared to communicate with him in case they offend him. We must just be a little careful of how we talk about race. (Interview 12: 7)

This is a view and attitude that Soudien (2007: 118-119) described as youth apparently saying, “Let’s be happy and get on with the business of building the new South Africa” and showing an inclination to “embrace the country’s essentially politics-free rainbow identity”. Dolby (2000: 20) noted that forms of “race making” had begun to rotate around an altogether new axis, which was “no longer legally bound by Apartheid racial categorisations”. However, despite the re-articulation of ‘race’ as a social and cultural construct by the youth, Soudien (2007: 29) pointed out that “race does not go away”.

Vally & Dalamba (1999) and Dolby (2000; 2001) have expanded on the concept of ‘youth culture’ and how local youngsters make meaning of their worlds, and demonstrated that the practices and behaviours of youth were no longer as much shaped by *race*, but rather

reconfigured *also* on the basis of ‘alternative contexts’, like global and local fashion, music and slang. Leigh-Ann, one of the learners participating in my study, observed that:

But inside our area, most of us are quite the same. We dress the same because it’s the fashion. Everybody wants to be “in”, so we do the “in” thing. Nobody wants to feel “out” or feel different. (Interview 5: 2 - 3)

Yet, in their sameness, interviewee Marc also noted that differences existed:

Here at the school, we speak differently. We don’t have the same aspects in our language as, say, children who are in another area. So, I think each area and school will have some things that are unique to that area. Here they’ll speak more “coloured”, like with the pronunciation of words, I’d say, and different words they use. They’d say “djuice” or “djy”, and instead of “Jason” it would be “Djyson”. They flatten out some sounds and even use different words like “gatsby”. Before I came to this school, I’d never heard of a “gatsby” before – and “sandals” as well, I know it’s something different, but not really what. (Interview 2: 1)

3.3.3 ‘Youth culture’: an active and creative construct

In both the groundbreaking works of Bowles and Gintis (*Schooling in Capitalist America* 1976) (newlearningonline.com/.../bowles-and-gintis-on-schooling-in-capital) and Willis (*Learning to Labour* 1977), the ways in which youth and their subcultures seemed to be caught up in a language of ‘moral panic’ was noted. Willis (1977) counter-argued that his research subjects, the ‘Lads’, (far from being ‘unruly’) were in reality developing their own counter-culture and actively involved in what he deemed to be *cultural production*.⁹ The ‘Lads’ had real choice and agency and part of their loathing of the ‘Ear ‘oles’ was that the Ear ‘oles had denied the ‘Lads’ agency and opportunities for autonomy.

“Cultural production” was defined by Rikowski (2006: 2) as “an active and creative process” that could not just be seen as adhering to certain economic requirements. In an article entitled “*Hip- Hop and Youth Culture: Contemplations of an emerging cultural phenomenon*”, Taylor & Taylor (2004: 251) similarly argued that youth culture needed to be recognised as “a complex system of ideas, values and concepts that reflect newly emerging and ever-changing creative, correlative and expressive mechanisms”.

According to Dolby (2001:110), youth culture is seen by the youth as a kind of “borderland” in which varying responses to everyday realities (such as re-imaginings, fresh negotiations and “trailblazing possibilities”) were possible; even accepted. In such a world of “new possibilities” (Soudien 2007: 124), youth were developing subcultures that fashioned fresh identities and pathways.

Adrian, one of the interviewees in my study, noted that while youth were probably not that different from the past, the new worlds with which they interacted (and within which they created new cultures) was somewhat different to ‘back then’:

In the olden days, I think the self-discipline was better. But, on the other hand, the youth have always been rebellious – but nowadays they are a bit more *open* about rebelling. I think that’s because of there being so many things changing in the past century – such as new technologies, new rights, new rules, new music, new everything... And these changes, they do affect us: perhaps, over a long period of time, as all these things have changed, our attitude to our world ... has also changed. (Interview 7: 1)

A key part of these emerging ‘youth subcultures’, however, seemed to include a display of increased *individualisation* that had become bound up in the nature and occupations of the current political moment. It is a subculture that has commonly become known as the “Y-generation”, which foregrounds the ‘self’ or the ‘I’. This fascination with the ‘self’ was identified by Beck (2002: 156), and Swartz (2010: 60) pointed to the “me-generation” in which the “centrality of the self” was firmly grounded. While many young people continued to “make their choices within a very narrow frame of reference” (Bray *et al* 2010: 289), their individualised ‘sense of self’ seemed to have drawn on the commodities, icons and practices of global popular culture. Dolby (2001: 64-66) noted that, through their actions and symbolic creativity, they came to fully embrace consumer culture and the pursuit of pleasure.

In ‘morphing’ into new constructions of identity that were mainly focussed on self-authorization, Nomathembi (one of my female interviewees) observed that:

Yes; me myself and I - I’m special and very unique. (She laughs.) It’s the way I think for myself and that I don’t let other people control what I do. I always let my own opinion come first - I do listen to other people, don’t get me wrong - but I always take what I know. I’ll make a decision about what others say; whether I think if I agree or not, I’ll not just accept what they say as right. I look through the consequences of everything going around and then only will I decide. If you want to be unique, you have to be yourself, and maybe that means you will be different from others. (Interview 8: 2 - 3)

For the thesis, while I was interested in understanding that youth placed *themselves as central figures in their own construction*, I particularly wanted to interrogate the notion of such individualised constructions being a form of contestation. McCulloch (2006: 539) pointed out that youth cultures are essentially “sites of resistance”, and Taylor & Taylor (2004: 251) hold that in most cases such youth cultures are “fledgling cultures that lack acceptance by adult cultures and are unrecognised as legitimate expression”.

Consequently, one can deduce that the focus on ‘I’ is as much a form of self-actualisation, as a form of contrasting the ‘self’ with the ‘other’. Rosehill & Seymour, as cited in Dawson (2003:3) also identified the notion of “*us-versus-them*” as a further characteristic of the youth’s efforts to establish unique identities.

Dawson (2003) further states that the youth as social agents should never be seen as isolated from their social experiences, and points out that the youth, in their efforts of self-actualisation, are caught up in the binary of *history* and the *interaction of shared experiences* with parents, peers, structures and different realities.

As such, Dolby (2001:11) argues, while it is often the global images and representations in the media that “intimately shape the youth’s play with the local lived reality”, local youths are not merely recipients of global culture, but are active and innovative participants in creating their own local youth cultures. Similarly, Garland (1990: 14) states that in creating individual ‘youth cultures’, the new and re-created “spheres of social life are never *exact microcosms* of the social structures depicted”.

One of the learners in my study, Ayesha, had recently returned from the Middle East where her family had lived for some time. In sharing the following regarding her experiences with individualisation and international societies, she noted how she had experienced the different global spaces and cultures, how her perceptions thereof were intimately shaped by the structures, and how she experienced this in everyday life:

I didn’t live in South Africa until recently. I lived in the Middle East for seven years, so I can compare my area here in South Africa to the area in which I lived overseas. Here I feel freer, but less safe. I don’t want to be judgmental, but here I am very scared to go to certain places with certain people, because you don’t know if it’s going to be *dodgy* and you don’t know if you’re going to get robbed or mugged ... or worse!

The youth in the Middle East are very influenced by Western civilization, so they have sort of lost their culture a bit. I lived in a British area and went to a British school, where they tried hard to make us feel that we lived in an “open” environment. But in the Middle East, everything there is very private and you have to be covered all the time. The fact that over there you have to act only a certain way makes the children a bit restless. If you did not fit in, you would be judged very badly by the law. On a personal level, I felt much safer and for younger people it was easier to get around. (I don’t mean that you can just *trust* everybody!) I was allowed to go anywhere, because it was so safe.

So yes, there is a big difference between the youth there and the youth here. But there are also things that are very much the same: corruption, and the youth misbehaving and they will also be rude. There are differences, but also many things that are the same regarding youth here and there. (Interview 12: 1- 2)

For the thesis I argued that learners, in terms of engaging with the difference between social *history* and *shared everyday experiences*, interacted with their particular surroundings and specific individuals by forming unique ways of ‘acting back’. As a result, such relationships formed by the youth became part of their individualised ‘ways of living’, or their ‘youth cultures’. As such, these came to be shaped by identifiable similarities (accommodation, confrontation and exclusion), each of which I explore below.

‘YOUTH CULTURE’ AS ACCOMMODATORY

In their study of 2010, Bray *et al* (2010: 56) noted the youth valued “the physical presence of adults, and their desire to, and demonstration of, support” for young people. A lack of adult presence or support, according to Soudien (2007: 2 - 31) often became a stumbling block to youth because without “significant help from adults” who could explain and help them understand and engage, many young people felt abandoned and as if they were “on their own”. Youth cultures were thus not exclusionary in character, and valued of the assistance of adults to provide inspiration, “mentoring” and “coaching” (Swartz 2010: 162).

One of the learners in my study, Steven, described his interaction with educators in the following way:

I’ve seen that if you’re nice to the teachers, they’ll be nice back at you and treat you with respect, like you want to be treated.

And this change has had an influence on my marks: in Grade 8, when I was disruptive, my marks just kept going down, but since I’ve been in Grade 9 it’s better – I actually passed all my subjects last term. Last term I got 55% for Maths and I think my teacher is the best! I really like her. I’ve seen that if you behave better, then your marks are also better. I think I’ve learnt this... and I’m happier.

I was actually surprised that following the rules made me feel better. The best thing ever must be that I actually passed Maths – it’s the first time I’ve ever passed Maths. In that term I didn’t fight with the teacher; there were only a few days that I came to class late. There was no fighting; no shouting and the teacher didn’t nag at me. (Interview 9: 5)

‘YOUTH CULTURE’ AS CONFRONTATIONAL

Interactions with adults often impacted, even shaped, behaviours and attitudes of the youth. Bray *et al* (2010: 192) note that in their study, educators featured prominently as “challenges” in the lives of the youth and that such adults were often the targets of mischief-making:

Pupils are also key players themselves in the drama of the class room, testing teachers - and driving some to desperation.

During my interview with Anurah, she explained:

Not all the teachers are these “discipline” people; only some. Take Ms Struwig: she has never had me for any subject, but she knows me and she will always tell me to stop misbehaving, even if I’m not doing anything. It sometimes makes me really angry. Because she always blames me and looks for reasons to punish me, so sometimes I decide to *give* her a reason! (Interview 10: 4)

It was also often owing to boredom or in an effort to distract the educator from giving them homework, that youth purposefully behaved in a confrontational manner, intentionally being rude or disruptive in order to humiliate and/or anger educators. During our interview, Anurah noted that:

Here at our school, these naughty kids are seen as *cool*, because they distract the teacher and then we get less work done and sometimes we won’t get homework. They do naughty things on behalf of the other kids, and that’s why naughty kids are popular. They make it fun - otherwise lessons are really boring. (She laughs.) (Interview 10: 2)

Soudien (2007: 4) explained that “terms such as the ‘X-generation’ or the ‘lost generation’ invariably carried overtones of wrongness, danger, and alarm”. As such, the youth associated themselves with these labels, which projected images of danger and excitement, which escalated into open disregard of and hostility to adult authority.

‘YOUTH CULTURE’ AS EXCLUSIONARY

As previously stated, one of the identifiers associated with ‘youth culture’ was that young people internalised and transformed standard cultural practises and in this way constructed anew their *individualised* ‘cultures’, which were characterised by many personal subjectivities.

In terms of setting themselves apart, ‘youth cultures’ inevitably incorporated exclusionary mechanisms, which defined each such ‘culture’ in particular and distinctive ways. Specifically, these mechanisms included the *fashions* adopted by the youth, the *music* they listened to and the ‘*slanguage*’ through which they communicated with their peers.

It is not uncommon (globally and locally) that youth find distinctive ways of dressing and marking their bodies to show difference. At the school that is the location of this study, Avondale High, youth regularly flout the school’s dress code by picking holes in the ribbing of their jersey sleeves through which they poked their thumbs, or the boys going without belts and having their pants drag on the ground. These are both individualistic ‘fashion statements’ and challenges to educators to ‘mark them out in the crowd’.

With regard to music, there is no doubt that adults struggle to appreciate the music that youth listen to or yearn for. ‘Generation gaps’ become most evident when educators try to share with learners their appreciation for music. As Dolby (2001: 73) noted in her study on youth in Durban, educators often misunderstood the kinds of tastes and likes of learners:

Many teachers are uninformed about the sharp divides regarding musical tastes. For example, the teacher used an Alanis Morissette song to illustrate the concept of irony to her class. Although the teacher thought she was connecting with her students through using popular music, the class overwhelmingly did not know Alanis Morissette.

Notably, music tastes are not only exclusionary in relation to educators and other adults, but also function as signs of distinctiveness amongst youth. As Kevin, an interviewee in my study, said:

There’s a big difference when it comes to music: here, one person will listen to house (music), and another will listen to rock. Where I live, everyone listens to the same type of music that I listen to, except for our next-door neighbour. When we listen to music, he will pull his car out and play loud music from his car! And it’s Afrikaans music, Ma’am. We don’t like it, and we keep on telling him to put it off. (Interview 11: 2)

Lastly, language is probably one of the most distinctive tropes amongst youth in marking social and individual difference (Bray *et al* 2010). In different places and geographical locations, youth cultures adopt forms of language and communication that exclude adults and educators, as well as those peers who are seen ‘apart’. Use of language often is a form of mocking of age, race, social class, and ‘un-hipness’. Examples abound in schools of learners that use distinctive words and phrases to describe things, events, and interactions. These forms of exclusion of the ‘unknowers’ also underpin bonding practices amongst youth and those that ‘belong’.

At Avondale High School, examples of such ‘slanguage’ abounded in the use of words like “dissing” (mocking), “diefiging their precious” (stealing from authority), and “minutes” (you have but minutes to escape serious trouble). These words are regularly used in the classroom to communicate with each other, keep educators out of the loop, and highlight distinctiveness. As most educators do not comprehend their meaning or usage within the classroom context, it is notable that when they do manage to *decode* slanguage, youth paradoxically change their words and phrases and the meanings to which educators have ‘cottoned on’.

3.3.4 ‘Youth culture’: a construct

‘Youth cultures’ were regarded by those who had been ‘othered’ as deliberately rebellious, challenging, vindictive, and intentionally confrontational. However, within such youth cultures varying responses to everyday realities, even “trailblazing possibilities” (Dolby 2001:110), were accepted. In such a world of “new possibilities” (Soudien 2007: 124), youth were developing subcultures that fashioned fresh identities and pathways.

Adrian, a learner in the study, noted that youth cultures are frequently quite emancipatory and beneficial:

And I have thought about *why* learners behave in such ways: wanting to be disruptive or rebellious or wanting to do those numerous other naughty little things that they just can’t help themselves doing.

I don’t think it’s only attention-seeking. I think it’s mainly to make a statement. They are saying, “I can do this. You can’t stop me; I’m free. I can do what I want, because I’m free.” In this way, the naughty learners try to break the *bonds that the school* imposes on them. I think, in this way, the youth also tries to break the *bonds that society* has put around them. (My italics) (Interview 7: 6)

In the sections above, I expanded on the youth as co-constructors of their particular realities using specific mechanisms that supported the formation of their own social lives. I dealt with the understandings of the constructs of such *youth cultures* in literature and how local youth incorporated different ‘youth cultures’ in their lives.

In the following section, I further explore these links as I connect the youth’s particular engagements - understood as specific to ‘youth culture’ - to issues of school discipline. I examine definitions and conceptualizations of the term ‘*discipline*’ and interrogate local understandings of such disciplinary ‘bonds’ (the “*bonds of the school and society*”, as referred to by Adrian in his interview above) established by policy. As a result, I have deduced that certain similarities exist and have used these to move toward finding an encompassing definition of the term ‘discipline’.

3.4 *Defining ‘discipline’*

3.4.1 ‘Discipline’: towards definition and understanding

On a global level, the “problem of discipline” (Covaleskie 1993: 5; Hirschfield 2008: 78; Kupchik 2009: 301) has been at the forefront of social and educational concerns for more than a century. However, as ‘school discipline’ is arguably “one of the most contentious topics in education” (To 2006: 779), the problematic nature of discipline might be one of the singular points on which all with a vested interest in education might agree.

Yet, in the field of educational sociology, it remains a largely under-theorised topic (Hirschfield 2008: 79; Yang 2009: 53). A review of the relevant literature has revealed that there are not many engagements with school discipline *per se*, especially studies focussed on exploring the connection between *discipline* (at schools) and the process of *social control* (at schools). Kupchik (2009: 295), in reference to Hirschfield's article *Preparing for prison* (2008), asserts that while much research has been done within the worlds of schools as research settings, "*few empirical efforts have been made to test ideas and theories regarding school discipline.*" (My italics)

Indeed, as I engaged with readings on the issue of discipline in education, almost all the writings that I accessed used the concept of 'discipline' without (or with only the most basic) definition. Its meaning, more often than not, was presupposed as 'different forms of punishment', which immediately lead to the discussion of methods of classroom management. According to Covalleskie (1993: 1) 'discipline' was characterised by forms of power and control, and came to be tantamount to classroom management strategies which called for the utilisation of "power and control" in the execution thereof. Despite accepting that 'discipline' (whatever it meant) was necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of youth at risk, educators invariably seemed to evade abstract engagement with the notion of 'discipline' (most identified such interaction as 'unsettling' and 'troublesome') and simply "got on with the task at hand" (Garland 1990: 8; Goldson *et al* 2003: 1).

As a generic term, '*discipline*' thus became "school-talk shorthand" (Garland 2001b: vii) that disregarded complex practices of control and underlying social theories. 'Discipline' became a one-dimensional kind of label to explain problematic contexts in schools.

3.4.2 'Discipline': conceptions in literature

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Kavanagh 2002: 331) notes that the word, *discipline*, originates from Middle English and Latin phrases meaning "instruction" and "knowledge". For the purpose of this thesis, three important denotations were identified, namely: *discipline* as formal punishment for an offence; *discipline* as a relationship between a *teacher* and a *learner*, and *discipline* as the practice of training people to obey rules or follow a code of behaviour.

With reference to the aspects of 'discipline' which involve both "*discipline* as formal punishment for an offence" and practices of "training people to obey rules or follow a code of behaviour", the seminal work done by Foucault in *Discipline and punish: the birth of the*

prison (1977) must be acknowledged early in this section as perhaps the most influential theoretical window (or framework) through which ‘school discipline’ could be understood. That said, in considering the Foucauldian definition and description of *discipline*, it is perhaps an overstatement to make an absolute correlation between prison and school.

Although Foucault (1977) did not directly focus on schools, it is his social theoretical work on penology and his analysis of principles of discipline, surveillance and punishment utilised in modern penal institutions that has facilitated understanding the working of discipline. Consequently, ‘school discipline’ was perceived more through the prism of crime control, and as such, rules and punishments at schools took guidance from crime and criminal justice policies. It followed logically that ‘rule-breaking’ and ‘trouble-making’ elicited severe disciplinary responses, resulting in the criminalisation of ‘school discipline’ (Hirschfield 2008: 78-94).

Foucault (1977) sought to show how the correlation between *processes of discipline*, *punishment* and the *power to punish* ultimately brought about ‘individualised conformity’. Expanding upon this description, Foucault (1977: 97) characterized *discipline* as a painstaking technique that was aimed at *regularisation and normalisation* of transgressors and:

the scrupulous administrative mode of dispensing power in the time of modernity (and beyond).

As Yang (2009: 53) notes, Foucault’s interpretation of *discipline* is multi-faceted and procedural, and *discipline* must be understood as “a mechanism, a ‘master’s tool’, a kind of unverifiable ‘gaze’, and not a singular source”.

In his historical work, *The spectacle of suffering*, Spierenburg (1984) drew direct causal links between violence (as reflected in publicly administered punishments) and the authority and the power of the state (to administer such punishments). He traced how ‘state discipline’ in the form these open displays of punishment changed in appearance over time, from being a public spectacle (a display of pain suffered before an audience) to one where punishment became concealed from the public eye. Spierenburg (1984) highlighted how discipline and punishment came to serve as key forms of ‘social control’, exercised by the machinery of state control, which historically included popular sanction and public judgement. Harris (2009: 3), in referring to Spierenburg, outlined how at present the notion of discipline and public ‘spectacles’ of punishment remain linked, albeit in more nuanced, multi-faceted and even insidious ways. Whereas Harris (2009) (based upon the work of Spierenburg) focused

on the mostly surreptitious nature of procedures of discipline and punishment in modern educational institutions, Kebede (2009:1) observed that ‘discipline’ referred to “the totality of methods that produced *subjected and practised* docile bodies ready for ‘utility’, where docile bodies were much to be found in schools”.

In his chilling article, *Racial injustice and disposable youth in the age of zero tolerance*, Giroux (2003: 553-565) argued that rigid American disciplinary educational and social policies had largely stigmatised, repressed and excluded youth (who are regarded as “errant” or “transgressive”) and that schools had become more like prisons than educational institutions. By directly linking school discipline to harsh policies focused on improving student behaviour and performance, schools had in fact contributed to academic failure, with larger numbers of learners in need ‘dropping out’. Fuentes (2003: 17 – 20) concluded that such disturbing statistics were indicative of the kind of educational failure that opened up a ‘school-to-prison’ pipeline, and pointed to the irony of flawed ‘discipline’ practices being the cause of school malfunction.

Yang (2009) suggested that authentic and effective educational *discipline* lay between the extremes delineated by Foucault (who described discipline as a coercive policy that acted upon the body in order to subvert it to conformative, productive labour); and *discipline* as a condition for action, as seen by Freire (1998: 86), who noted that:

True discipline does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced but in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hopes of those who have been awakened.

The task of educational theorists and sociologists will be to better explore where the structural and organisational properties that govern contemporary thought about discipline in schools are indeed located, and to capture and describe the recurring social and cultural dynamics that frame how ‘discipline’ is lived. In doing so, such work must move beyond the variety of *punitive (and penal) solutions* already in place that deal concretely and with immediacy with the marginalizing behaviour of those that are perceived as the ‘other’, and also do some theorising on the sociologies of such behaviours and what they mean (Garland 2001a: 199).

In identifying this theoretical challenge, I concede that the nature of ‘discipline’ as a contextualised social construct in a globalised world would make addressing and describing an ever fluent and changing set of disciplinary principles a daunting task indeed.

3.4.3 ‘Discipline’: global and local intersections

It could be argued that the actions and reactions of youth, often framed as ‘resistance to the school’, can be interpreted as “a sane response to an insane world” where resistance to a “carceral system of education” offers possibilities for the construction of new subjectivities and even emancipatory practices (Yang 2009: 53-56). As such, the school serves as a representative social context (that is singularly shaped for youthful engagement) within which opportunities to experiment, push boundaries and question perceived “certainties” abound (Van Deventer 2003: 38). It is one of the paradoxes of education that while being *sites of struggle* schools have also always been vehicles through which “young people assert their stake and role in society” (Bezuidenhout & Joubert 2003: 62).

In such social worlds, youth frame their questions in forms that are invariably regarded as *disruptive, challenging, or ‘undisciplined’*. More often than not, this is linked to the worlds of uncertainty that youth inhabit; and even on a global level, such uncertainties are not fully considered. Giroux (2009: 17) states:

What is evaded in the representations of young people is the recognition that the lives, experiences, and environments of the current generation of youth are entirely different from those of previous generations and that underlying these differences are a variety of political, cultural, and social forces.

In negotiating contradictory spaces, exploring binaries and making sense of different paradoxes in order to find equilibrium between identity and meaning, youth make sense of their worlds through *deconstruction*, which in the words of Burbules (1995: 2), moves them into decidedly uncharted terrain:

It is a strange terrain that replaces notions such as ‘denial’ and ‘refutation’ with notions such as ‘doubt’, ‘displacement’, ‘instability’, and ‘uncertainty’.

In his article *Between the ‘local’ and the ‘global’*, Mather (2007: 143) refers to a relationship of palpable tension between the above global situation and local contexts of education in South Africa. He suggests that what is currently happening in South African schools reflects much of the same kinds of transgression of school rules and school “indiscipline” (and in the responses by authorities to such transgressions) as that of other countries across the globe. Thus, while South African contexts may be quite unique, there remain significant *lines of connection* between what happens in schools here and what happens in other global contexts (Swartz 2010: 159).

3.4.4 ‘Discipline’: local schools

As highlighted above, one of the most important challenges in South African schools currently is how to restore what is termed ‘*good discipline*’ and a “sound culture of learning and teaching” (Western Cape Education Department 2007: ii). Smit (2010: 34 - 49) explores links made between learner misconduct and the negative influence thereof on the culture of learning and teaching at schools and emphasises that “disrespectful behaviour towards educators which manifests itself in numerous forms of misconduct” was reported to be the most common problem in schools.

As Bezuidenhout (2003: 62) notes, the “lack of discipline” in South African schools has become an ever escalating problem, and one that is continuously and negatively influencing the learning of other learners (National Youth Policy 2008: 16).

This supposedly stands in stark contrast to the rigid and inflexible schooling under Apartheid that ironically “offered the promise of heightened discipline, regulation, and surveillance, and where the principal imaginary was of a society in which everyone knew their place—economically, politically, and socially” (Posel 2001: 58).

With the perceived collapse of the culture of teaching and learning in secondary schools in South Africa (Van Deventer 2003: 4), local research has emphasised the overall lack of ordered behaviour among learners at schools, acknowledging that while “some of the problems in schools are systemic, much has been caused by young people themselves” (National Youth Policy 2008: 19). In the text below, I show how this conundrum was captured in four different research projects on youth in South Africa.

In *Constructing Race*, Dolby (2001:37-38) highlighted behavioural problems amongst youth at her site of study, Fernwood High, calling them “zones of collision” in which the celebratory discourses of the 1990s had been replaced by severe disciplinary and academic problems. Dolby (2001:39) noted that educators regularly spoke about how they were not teaching, but only doing “riot control” in a “war zone” and said that they were in “survival mode”. She observed that one first year register educator had described her class as one in which learners “were cutting each other’s hair off, setting fire to desks, and pissing in lunchboxes” (Dolby 2001:39). According to Joubert & Prinsloo (2009: 1), such endemic behavioural problems seemed to be symptomatic of a far deeper disciplinary malaise, as these were prevalent amongst both educators and learners:

Newspaper headlines refer to learners who are molested by educators, learners who steal at school, alcohol abuse by learners and educators, violence among learners, guns taken to school and many other incidents.

Dolby (2001:43) noted that problems at Fernwood were often rooted in “collisions over difference” where the school management was “unwilling and unable to embrace the totality of its new world” and, as a result, the school had become progressively “unmanageable and laden with racial tensions”. For Dolby (2001: 45), the discipline problems observed at her research site had come about due to a variety of underlying insecurities, namely the conflict between *continuity* and *change*; the problem of how to engage with difference, and how to understand differences between authoritarianism and democracy within structures of governance at the school.

In her recent work entitled *iKasi: the moral ecology of South Africa's township youth*, Swartz (2010: 147) described “frequent school disruptions” at her school site, albeit that she regarded this as forms of “resistance to the prevailing culture” (Swartz 2010:165):

It was a world of violence. It was a place where a Grade 8 forces his penis into another boy's mouth to ‘teach him a lesson’, where 14-year old boys rob girls of sweets at knifepoint, where teachers came to school drunk, smoked *dagga* with students in toilets and elicited sex from female students.

Furthermore, as Swartz (2010: 32-33) pointed out, students chatted incessantly amongst themselves while a teacher was attempting to speak in class, homework was seldom done, and books were rarely brought to school. Disrespect was endemic, and there was shouting, fighting and a general lack of educational participation in class. It seemed, observed Swartz (2010:33), as if the aim of students was “everyone making chaos”. According to the author, (Swartz 2010: 53) this kind of ill-discipline was attributable to the lack of values (especially respect) and the inability of educators to embody such values.

With regard to the youth at this school, their mind-sets highlighted their attitudes to life that showed how modern ideals of materialism and desire had begun to shape their self-actualisations; attitudes that often came into conflict with authority.

Bray *et al* (2010) also described such attitudes of disrespect and chronic discipline problems in their study of schools in Cape Town. Learners at Masiphumelele High and (to a slightly lesser degree) Ocean View Secondary were portrayed as displaying disruptive behaviour (Bray *et al* 2010: 199), a reluctance to make any academic effort and a complete lack of individual responsibility, characterised by frequent absenteeism (Bray *et al* 2010: 188):

Teachers and pupils are often absent from the room. Even inside the classroom, many pupils are forever playing with their cell phones. Only a minority of pupils do set homework.

Bray *et al* (2010: 198; 201) pointed to the irony that even in such dire educational straits, often exacerbated by the learners themselves (as result of their own agency as they perversely challenged) their teachers, students expressed a heart-felt desire for some kind of order and structure:

Pupils push the boundaries of their behaviour and do not respect teachers because the boundaries they set are moveable. Pupils say they would like to have more effective discipline and structure at the school. They say that disorder in the classroom undermines their ability to understand their work.

On the other hand, Bray *et al* (2010: 194) noted that at Fish Hoek High a rigid programme of discipline was in place; one that was seen as so regulatory that the school resembled a “prison camp”. Order and control were exemplified by punctuality by learners and educators, surveillance mechanisms (especially at break times) and a focus on locked entrance gates and classroom doors. In this environment, learners were able to concentrate on their studies and this is exemplified in good academic results attained by the school.

Bray *et al* (2010: 199 – 200) pointed out that, at Fish Hoek High, the “virtuous” cycle of discipline was shaped by mainly three aspects: the co-operation between pupils, teachers and other agents of the school; the school environment (being conducive to teaching and learning) in which policies of the Governing Body and the Department of Education were well implemented and congruent values between home, school and society.

In Soudien’s study, *Youth identity in contemporary South Africa* (2007), he identifies the so-called “youth puzzle” (the question of “how young people find their social, ethical and intellectual bearings in the maelstrom of modern South Africa” [2007: xi]) as the root of many problems being experienced in schools. In this sense, Soudien and Burbules (1995:7) argue:

Difficulty is not simply the challenge of a problem to be overcome, but the lingering intricacy of a problem never fully solved, a mystery never fully untangled – an acceptance of both the provisional and contingent.

3.4.5 ‘Discipline’: change in legislation, policy and praxis

The well-documented and dramatic political and social changes that South Africa underwent after 1994 concealed somewhat of a contradiction in terms, namely that the abolition of Apartheid did not bring any certainties or firm new foundations. Knowing what was *wrong* before was easy but suddenly it was much harder identifying what was *correct*.

Transformation proved to imply *continuous* change, which left many South Africans reeling under pervasive feelings of insecurity (Ramroop 2004: 39–41; Mather 2007: 143). Consequently, it was these feelings of impermanence and continually changing concepts and constructs that then led to “young people trying to find (individual) direction in a disorienting, globalised world dominated by market values” (Soudien 2007: viii).

The question is: how did this process of change come to be manifested? Joubert (2001: 24) points out that after 1994 principles of democracy and the protection of human rights had to be written into the law books and into different realms of policy. With educational legislation focussed firmly on transformative regulations and procedures, the primary goal was to entrench the social values such as democratic justice, citizenship, and equality (Fataar 2010: 91).

THE MACRO-CONTEXT

In recognising the injustices of the South African past, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the current Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, on 8 May of that year, which wrote into law the values of democracy, social justice and human rights (Joubert 2009: 35). Following, educational legislation was tabled, including the *White paper on Education and Training* (1995); the *South African Qualifications Act* (No. 58 of 1995) and the *National Education Policy Act* (No. 27 of 1996). According to Joubert (2009: 25), the *South African Schools Act* (No. 84 of 1996) had the immediate aim of ensuring the fundamental values of equal treatment and equal opportunity existed within a democratic education system.

THE MESO-CONTEXT

The policy document, *Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework* of 1996 was the first curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa. It was informed by the principles derived from the *White paper on Education and Training* (1995)(www.info.gov.za/whitepapers/1995/education1.htm); the *South African Qualifications Act* (No. 58 of 1995)(www.saflii.org/za/legis/numact/elaa1999235.txt) and the *National Education Policy Act* (No. 27 of 1996) (www.acts.co.za/nationaleducationpolicyact_1996.htm) and emphasised the need to normalise and transform teaching and learning in South Africa.

As part of that process, it was argued that schools needed to reflect the new emphasis on citizenship and human rights and take seriously efforts to bring about social justice. Perhaps

the most visible of changes in schools in this regard was the abolition of corporal punishment. When Section 8 of the *South African Schools Act (1996)* (<http://www.acts.co.za/ed/sasa.index.htm>) stipulated that a Code of Conduct (which would protect the rights of learners) had to be implemented, school managers were “left with the responsibility of identifying and implementing alternative disciplinary practices (to corporal punishment) and procedures”. Such vague guidelines inevitably resulted in educators facing “daily struggles in their school environment with issues of discipline” (Department of Education 2000: i).

While the goal the ‘Code of Conduct’-policy was to bring about a *‘disciplined’ and purposeful school* (Joubert 2009: 27), in most instances this did not occur and instead contributed to ambiguity with regard to discipline within schools, as experienced by learners, educators and parents alike.

THE MICRO-CONTEXT

Education in South Africa is a *public* service and thus it is legally imperative to foster a ‘human rights culture’ at different schools in order to promote the self-esteem and self-respect of individual learners (Joubert 2009: 29-31). However, according to Yang (2009:53), ‘discipline’ is often regarded as a necessary condition for the protection of different rights in the social worlds of schools, and it is understandable that in environments where order and ‘discipline’ is lacking, rights and values cannot be fostered. In efforts to keep control, ‘discipline’ can also exacerbate conflict between authoritarian educators (and school officials) and the learners’ *a priori* assumptions of “democratic values” in student-centred classrooms.

However, Currie & De Waal (as cited by Joubert 2009:42) note that constitutional rights have boundaries and are very much delineated by the civil liberties of others. Social concerns about order and ‘discipline’, safety, health and the protection of the democratic values of *all* citizens further demarcate the extent of any ‘rights’ claimed by citizens.

In this respect, because educational ‘success’ can be eroded by “a lack of discipline in schools and the unruliness of a few” (Bray 2010: 180), policy makers and education officials have developed and provided a number of guides, courses and workshops (as identified and described in the following paragraphs) for educators since 2000 to address the compelling ‘discipline problems’ that impact on education in South Africa.

The basic premise regarding school discipline, as contained in Section 11(2) of the South African Schools Act (Department of Education 2000: i) is that ‘positive discipline’ should be

educative, corrective and nurturing, and learners, educators and parents should endeavour to support and uphold regulations put in place by school management to engender said ‘positive discipline’.

Consequently, a number of guides have been developed from such interactions, examples of which include *The Learning Experience – Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* (DoE 2000); *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* (Wits Education Policy Unit 2002); and *Learner discipline and school management* (WCED 2007). Furthermore, *Positive Behaviour* workshops stretching over 4 years (WCED2011: Metropole North 2009 – 2012) have been developed and instituted by South African education departments.

In the Department of Education document *Learner discipline and school management* (WCED 2007: 4) references are made to “learner behaviour problems”, “behavioural issues” and “positive discipline”. The document reflects a shift from “behaviour management to relationship building and the promoting of a restorative approach to *challenging behaviour*” (DoE 2007: 2), emphasising the values of “respect, caring, knowledge of each other’s feelings and responsibility” (DoE 2007: 4). The emphasis has shifted from focussing on learners’ rights to the development of ‘disciplined’ learners displaying “self-control, responsibility, obedience and excellence” (DoE 2007: 14). However, this change in emphasis has left educators to be seen merely as *agents* of ‘discipline’:

‘Discipline’ means that educators must exercise their authority in the best interest of the learner with emphasis on the development of self-discipline, independence and maturity (DoE 2007:26).

For this study, it is important to note that the document, *Learner discipline and school management* (WCED 2007: 37) qualifies the concept of ‘discipline’ by referring to three distinct aspects: classroom management (with support actions by school management); guidelines (based on legislation and policy) to implement as *praxis*, and ‘positive’ relationships between (transgressing) learners and educators.

3.5.6 ‘Discipline’ and multiple meanings

In examining local literature, I found contrasting understandings of the concept of ‘discipline’. Bezuidenhout (2003: 62) and Joubert (2009) noted that while terminologies pertaining to and perceptions of ‘discipline’ were often confusing, the problem of youth misbehaviour were best addressed through processes that took escalating violence seriously. It was further observed that (Bezuidenhout 2003: 65):

The lack of discipline is a common problem that has not changed since the arrival of democracy in South African. In fact, violence appears to be escalating, aggravating the existing lack of discipline.

On the other hand, Coetzee (2008:217) interpreted ‘discipline’ as an educative and non-punitive process used by classroom managers to foster self-control and self-actualization of the learners. Le Mottee, cited in Coetzee (2008: 216) argued that education laws could resolve most of the issues associated with learner discipline:

‘Discipline’ has everything to do with ensuring a safe and valuing environment so the rights and needs of people are respected, vindicated and safeguarded.

Mokhele (2006) argued that it was through effective discipline in classrooms and proper relationships that educators would reclaim authority as classroom managers. He reasoned that ‘discipline’ could be attained in high schools through the use of non-authoritarian power and the building of loving, caring and guiding relationships between educators and learners. He asserted that by making discipline more ‘child-focused’ it would result in positive changes in disruptive behaviour, self-control, self-assertion, self-discipline and self-esteem would be fostered (<http://www.erp.org.za/htm/issuepg>).

Recent publications by Wolhuter *et al* (2008), and Matsitsa (2008) highlight links between best ‘discipline’ practices and effective processes of school and classroom management, emphasising the role of the school managers and educator(s) as key agents in the establishment of ‘disciplined’ environments conducive to safe teaching and learning.

In moving toward definition of the term ‘discipline’ (and in synopsis of this section) I found the work of the British author, Goldson (2002) particularly helpful. Although his focus is on the youth in secure and penal settings, discussions of ‘deviant’ behaviour was pertinent to the debates regarding ill-discipline at schools engaged with in this thesis. Goldson offers three broad characterizations of ‘discipline’; which I utilize to effectively condense viewpoints on the characteristics of school discipline, as discussed in this section:

‘DISCIPLINE’ IN SCHOOLS IS PROCEDURALLY AND SITUATIONALLY BOUND

The concept of ‘discipline’ in schools is bound and moulded by constraints that are fluid and ever-changing in nature, namely political exigencies and the changing imperatives of legislation and policy. Furthermore, the different situations and material (often impoverished) contexts that shape the lives of learners and the economic limitations that restrict institutional

capacity and possibilities of organisational change directly impact issues of discipline within limited classroom and school management contexts.

‘DISCIPLINE’ IMPLIES A RECIPROCAL, AMBIVALENT AND INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

Learners and their behaviours are often grouped in two categories, namely “endangered” and “dangerous” (Goldson 2002: 155) and it is assumed that learners willingly and wrongfully place themselves and (or) others at risk. Little research has focused on the understanding of children who display damaging behaviours, or on the subjectivities of learners embroiled in issues of discipline. Adults determine the format interventions take and shape the kinds of relationships that emerge within classrooms around issues of discipline. On the other hand, learners need to be granted fuller opportunities to participate and be heard.

‘DISCIPLINE’ IN SCHOOLS INVOLVES RELATIONSHIPS OF ‘POWER’ BETWEEN MANAGERS, EDUCATORS AND LEARNERS

According to Goldson (2002), “disciplinary power” serves a necessary and formative function in society. In schools, Kebede (2009: 2) identifies three markers of institutionalised ‘power’, namely “hierarchical observation”, “normalizing judgment”, and “examination”, which produce ‘discipline’. However, within the process of education and in classroom all actors are acted upon; even educators and school managers are ‘*normalized*’ by the selfsame processes of power by which the young learners are ‘disciplined’. Covaleskie (1993: 41) points out that discipline can be seen as a powerful force that brings all participants towards compliance:

Conformity results from the constant workings of invisible constraints that bring us all towards the same ‘normal’ range of beliefs and practices.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I clarified the key concepts of ‘youth’ and ‘youth culture’ in the study by referring not only to how these were used in the literature, but also allowing the learners’ standpoints to be heard. In this way, I hoped to move closer to understandings of concepts that had multiple meanings, and in so doing, paraphrasing Sullivan (2004:46), ensure that “everybody understand what others are thinking”.

Owing to the large body of literature on the topic of discipline in schools and the powerful position this concept holds in everyday life central, it was necessary to explore the concept at three levels: the conceptualisation and attempt at definition thereof (as done in this chapter),

the interrogation of theories on discipline (as in the chapter following), and finding how youth acted back and thought about structures and procedures of discipline at Avondale High.

In this chapter, the foundation was laid to further explore the relationship between the active role that the youth play in constructing and determining their own lives (through behaviours displaying their 'youth culture') and structures of 'discipline' at Avondale High.

In the chapter below, I engage with the viewpoints of three theorists, namely Durkheim, Foucault and Bourdieu, and capture some of their ideas in relation to the 3 characteristics of 'discipline' as identified in the chapter above, namely:

- 'discipline' is procedurally and socially confined;
- 'discipline' is based on inter-personal relationships and
- 'discipline' implies relationships of power.

CHAPTER 4

THEORISING ISSUES OF ‘DISCIPLINE’:

DURKHEIM, FOUCAULT AND BOURDIEU

This is not a set of rules to follow but a journey and conversation I invite others to join.

Graham (2005: 2)

4.1 Introduction

Issues of discipline and social order are theoretical concerns in education mainly because learners are social beings that are at the same time both individual and part of broader communities. Learners may inhabit separate bodies, have their own experiences, feelings, and ambitions, but they are not completely independent. They need social contact to remain physically and emotionally healthy, and they also need decent levels of cooperation and coordination with others to learn and to lead orderly lives. This means that every learner needs to have some stable expectations about theirs and others behaviour, and they must each commit to work together with others towards the same social and educational ends (Hechter & Horne 2003: 285). What this means is that school structures and procedures also have to be coordinated and educators and learners in schools have to cooperate to achieve key goals.

How to understand these processes in schools remains a key sociological and conceptual dilemma as coordination and cooperation require all involved to make certain assumptions about human nature and about individual motivation. Furthermore, in such situations it is mostly assumed that the absence (or low levels) of social collaboration and synchronization ultimately leads to social disorder, and that the provision of quality education and care (and other social needs, like improved public health, ecological stability, and spiritual well-being) is often severely tested and even compromised in such situations. On the other hand, it is equally accepted that overly high levels of orderliness in schools is also undesirable as it frequently inhibits individual growth and motivation.

Thus, the questions that school managers and educationalists often ask is: how are acceptable levels of social order achieved and maintained? Furthermore, under which conditions are youth and adults able to work together seamlessly, and what mechanisms are needed to maintain order in schools?

Given the complex nature of both social phenomena and human beings, there are no easy ways to understand this. It is at this juncture that the value of social theory is understood, as

theory provides ways of identifying common developments, everyday facts, and human motivation; theory subjects these aspects to analysis of which the ultimate goal is to produce for the reader a map with which to better understand the highlighted social concern.

However, theories are by definition incomplete. They cannot explain, identify, or understand every situation. Nor can all theories be applied to all contexts. Rather, some theories, and others not, serve to focus our thoughts in given situations in ways that allow us to better understand that particular social world. As such, the selection of appropriate theories comes down to which are more likely to best explain the given phenomenon (Hechter & Horne 2003: 292).

For the thesis, in teasing out the social issues related to youth, school, and discipline that results in escalating social challenges (particularly in relation to jeopardised *order* within high schools in the Western Cape), I had to identify some key theorists whose work would allow me to explain what was happening in my school with regard to school discipline, and whose ideas could be applied in ways that made sense of what was happening. In that respect, I do not claim that I have identified all the relevant theories, or that the theorists that I identify and discuss below are the most appropriate. Rather, I focus on and examine some of those that I think can help me explain the social issues at the heart of this thesis topic.

I explore the positions of Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Although each of their views lies in quite different traditions within social theory (for example structuralism, post-modernism, post-colonial/post-structuralism), I argue that a brief look at some of their main arguments provides useful insights into the issue of punishment and discipline within public institutions, and especially schools.

4.2 *Emile Durkheim*

Emile Durkheim, as a functional exponent of structural theory (Fionda 2005: 74; <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Sociology/1644/200910/Karl-Marx-Emile-Durkheim.htm>; <http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/structural.htm>) questioned those phenomena attributed to society at large in order to make sense of cause-and-effect relationships in social life. He asked, “If universality is not the mark of normality, then what is?” (Pickering 1979: 37). One of Durkheim’s particular interests was how societies maintained their integrity and coherence in the modern age, especially when the collective characteristics of ethnic background and religion could no longer be assumed (Knapp 1986: 596 – 599). Thus, Durkheim came to be especially concerned with issues of *social*

integration and the effective *restraints* needed to assure the unity of said society, questioning not only what society *was* but also what *kept* society *together*. As cited by Allen (2005: 136), Durkheim was of the following opinion:

If society lacks the unity that derives from the fact that the relationships between its parts are exactly regulated, that unity resulting from the harmonious articulation of its various functions assured by effective discipline; then it is no more than a pile of sand that the least jolt or the slightest puff will suffice to scatter.

For Durkheim, issues of order and societal discipline lay at the heart of this “unity” (and indeed the very structure of society), for it represented an important example of the ‘collective conscience at work’ (Garland 1990: 23). He argued that discipline and punishment were processes embedded within everyday living that were meant to both demonstrate and regenerate core societal values. As such, these processes provided important insights into the moral cores of life, around which community and social solidarity was formed. For Durkheim it was important to understand and identify the main sources by which social harmony and cohesion were achieved, noting that “the morality of each people is directly related to the social structure of the people practising it” (cited in Garland 1990: 24).

Using the relationship between social morality and its conditions of existence in society as his main object of analysis, Durkheim argued that while discipline and punishment often “had quite mundane social and disciplinary functions”, they also functioned as important “moral phenomena that operated within the circuits of everyday moral life” (Garland 1990: 24). He argued that this gave meaning to how society sought to develop and grow, especially given that in defining moral frameworks different societies had to ensure that the form and content of such structures reflected the current conditions of social organisation (Garland 1990: 25). The conception of *moral order* and its *role in social life* represented, for Durkheim, the cornerstone of intellectual inquiry. Consequently, his work focused on how moral order influenced people and their relationships, and how it formed the symbolic centre of social cohesion (Garland 1990: 25).

Garland (1990: 27) suggests that Durkheim’s interpretations of societal structures remain relevant to society today, because the same “elementary characteristics still underpin our practice and give it its true meaning”. Of particular relevance is Durkheim’s concept of the changed “*conscience collective*” of modern humanity: that the *common conscience* within worlds in which diversity can flourish is no longer based on prescriptive religious codes, but rather on generic values such as freedom, reason, tolerance, and respect for the individual (Garland 1990: 56).

The value of Durkheim's viewpoints with regard to my thesis is twofold. Firstly, Durkheim points to a firm correlation between *discipline*, *punishment*, and *morality*. He notes that while punishment and discipline do not create moral authority the existence of disciplinary structures implies that moral codes are in place and that they have been breached. As a result, punishment is crucial in preventing the collapse of moral authority. As Garland (1990: 43) notes, Durkheim was of the view that:

Punishment ensures that the moral order will not be destroyed by individual violations which rob others of their confidence in authority (and serves to limit) the demoralising effects of deviance and disobedience. Punishment's role is to demonstrate the reality and actual force of moral commands.

With regard to discipline, Durkheim emphasises authoritative communal bonds that ensure the solidarity of societies. He argues that "morality appears everywhere to the observer as a code of duties" (Pickering 1979: 37–38). Additionally, Durkheim's theory regarding the "anomic" society highlights how, when the values (or norms) on which the rules of behaviour are based have broken down during periods of social crisis, moral codes become challenged. In such situations, disciplinary mechanisms flourish society attempts to uphold the *status quo* (Bezuidenhout 2003: 89). Although an anomic society will prevail when disciplinary bonds are progressively diminished, members of society will respond in hostile and aggressive ways which demand that offenders (whether having committed a crime or transgression) be punished. What interested Durkheim at such times was that 'passion became the soul of punishment and vengeance its primary motivation' (Garland 1990: 31). The essence of punishment, he argued, was not rational or instrumental control but rather fervour and an unthinking emotion, exacerbated by the sense that the *sacred* had been violated (Garland 1990: 32).

Secondly, Durkheim's views offer important understandings of the ways in which the transgression of moral codes and punishment function in society. Durkheim, as cited in Garland (1990: 33), notes that "transgression and crime bring together upright consciences and concentrates them" to serve as the "collective expression of shared moral passions". This social and collective conscience demonstrates the bonds of moral order, and punishment and disciplinary structures then become mechanisms that uphold the society's "moral circuitry in motion" (Garland 1990: 33). For Durkheim, discipline within society displayed a dual nature. On the one hand it was characterised by the individual's feelings of righteousness, and on the other it implied social morality. These two features "coexisted in a functional spiral that helped to create and recreate social cohesion" (Garland 1990: 34).

In his book, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893, translated by Simpson in 1933) Durkheim highlighted how disciplinary responses came to be developed as organised forms within society through the institutional and penal apparatuses of government, which drew its authority from the common conscience (studymore.org.uk/xdur.htm). The value of Durkheim for this study lies in the recognition that discipline is less a form of ‘instrumental rationality’ than a ‘routinised expression of emotion’ (Garland 1990: 35).

In order to encapsulate and organise Durkheim’s key ideas regarding the concept of ‘discipline’ in a relational way (as those of Foucault and Bordieu further in this chapter), I utilised the three broad characterizations of ‘discipline’ offered by Goldson (2002). These were ‘procedural and situational confines’, ‘inter-personal relationships’, and relationships of or to power’. In the section below, I highlight some of Durkheim’s core ideas according to three identified themes in the study.

4.2.1 Procedural and situational confines

From Durkheim’s views that I noted, I realised that underlying mechanisms and functions of discipline and punishment came to remain constant in society, while the institutionalised forms thereof underwent historical change. Given that the power and authority of the state lay in upholding society’s ‘moral codes’ and fundamental values, institutionalised agencies (drawing their power from the moral sanction of the state) carried out specifically designed procedures and processes of discipline in the form of institutionalised punishments.

A noteworthy modern development was that, as societies became differentiated and individually unique, the diversity of values led to more moderate reactions to the violation of their moral and legal codes. However, while structures of discipline and methods of punishment became more differentiated and categorised as a result of changes in labour, increased competition, and increased specialisation within different workplaces, the basic response to transgressions of discipline remained one of denunciation and rejection of the perpetrator (Garland 1990: 35).

4.2.2 Inter-personal relationships

Durkheim noted that because processes of discipline and punishment involved multiple parties (the controller(s), the controlled, and the onlookers), the population at large felt involved. This provided the social context and justification for processes of control and punishment (Garland 1990: 32).

Historically, the inter-relatedness of the parties involved with punishment related especially to the *audience of onlookers* to whose sense of righteousness and justification the cruel penal rituals would appeal strongly. In modern society, despite most administrative forms of penal punishment and sanctioning being removed from the public eye, court trials have retained the character of the “public performance” and still serve multiple functions, for example the education of the public, reassurance, retribution, and cathartic release.

Conversely, Durkheim also pointed to the development of the “cult of the individual” in modern society (Allan 2005: 132–133). In this case, the individual, rather than the collective, became the focus of the upholding of the values that were supposed to hold society in place and as such, the individual came to be at the centre of disciplinary ‘rituals’.

4.2.3 Relationships of power

According to Durkheim, the modern government was the guardian of the “*conscience collective*” and held the power (in the form of state mechanisms and specialist institutions) to enact punishment and discipline. In modern societies power was already historically in place, but authority was further formed through “moral training” within the family, the school and elsewhere in society (Garland 1990: 42).

State institutions (like schools) were the “perfect settings” and the task of modern education was the development of a secular, rational morality and to find the best means of socialising learners into this new *conscience collective* (Garland 1990: 42). As cited in Garland (1990: 43), Durkheim noted that:

The ends of education are social. In fact, educational institutions are often an abbreviated form of social institutions. And the role of the teacher was about upholding in the classroom the already fragile moral order of society.

For the thesis, the value of Durkheim’s theories regarding “discipline” (and punishment) was that I came to understand that its role and function was not only to uphold the moral structure of societies based on specific and individualised morals, but also that discipline was politically necessary to uphold specific forms of authority.

4.3 Michel Foucault

Any study on discipline (and punishment), or youth transgression and deviance, has to take into account the contribution of Michel Foucault (Garland 1990; Garland 2001; Apple 1995; McLaren 1995; Fionda 2005; Giroux 2009; Dillabough 2010). Garland (1990a: 131).observes that:

Foucault's influence has been such as to virtually eclipse all other, more established traditions and to set a new agenda for contemporary research in the field of punishment.

In contrast to Durkheim, theories espoused by Foucault (as expounded especially in *Discipline and Punish*) do not as much emphasise the generalised *social context* or the *moral foundations* in which disciplinary configurations are grounded, and instead emphasise the dual aspects of the *technologies* and *operative structures* of disciplinary power, especially the ways it focused on the 'body'. Foucault (1977: 177) notes that at the heart of all disciplinary systems lies a system of power and regulation that is imposed upon populations, and fulfils key instrumental and utilitarian functions. Foucault is thus mainly concerned about how domination is achieved and individuals socially constructed in modern society, and how public institutions are set up to develop and refine modern techniques of control.

Foucault defined 'discipline' as a *general formula of domination* - as those methods of temporal, spatial, and movement codification that "made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, and assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (Foucault 1977: 137). As a result of this powerful coercive relationship between the *body*, the *knowledge* thereof and the *power* thus exercised over it, 'discipline' increased the forces of the body (in economic terms of 'utility') and diminished those same forces (in political terms of 'obedience') (Foucault 1977: 138). 'Discipline' was thus seen as traversing all points of life and supervising every moment in institutions with the single goal of comparing, differentiating, hierarchical, homogenising, and excluding. In short: '*discipline*' is *normalised* (Foucault 1977: 183).

This concept of normalisation referred to forms of regulation that set standards or norms for proper conduct, and suggested how to correct deviations from the norm. According to Foucault (1977: 179), within the process of normalisation "disciplinary punishment" had a particular role to play in society:

Disciplinary punishment has the function of reducing gaps. It must therefore be essentially *corrective*. (It is) not only a small-scale model of the court. What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable.

Crucial to Foucault's arguments was the idea that discipline was not simply about disciplining individuals, but about 'producing' them in accordance with notions of rationality, efficiency, and humanitarianism. Punishment and discipline produced the 'rituals and the

truths' whereby people organised their lives and constituted themselves (Garland 1990a: 137).

Also, by locating the individual within a particular community, the transgressor could be tracked and subjected to measurement, assessment, diagnosis, cure, and transformation based on what was known about the particular community and its socio- economic context. In this way, it was not only the person who had been identified as the source of the problem that could be 'produced' and controlled, but also his community.

By lodging a whole set of "assessing, diagnostic, prognostic, normative judgments, concerning transgressors" within the framework of disciplinary judgments, the "penitentiary technique" was moved from penal institutions and transferred to the entire social body of the state. Mechanisms of normalization, as performed through the disciplines of education, psychological services, and social work, thereafter labelled those that transgressed society's dictates as both "bad" and "abnormal". According to Foucault (1977: 298), this kind of coercion was not only "a more subtle form of power" and control, but also a more authoritative one.

4.3.1 Procedural and situational confines

What was particular about Foucault's views (1977: 142 – 147) was that discipline focused on the distribution of 'bodies' (individuals) in space and that *functional spaces* (like schools sites), *enclosures* (within a school), and *partitionings* (within a class) contributed into crucial ways to the *educational institution* becoming a key locus of 'discipline'.

Moreover, Foucault's views emphasised that 'discipline' was supported by the control of *time*, *content*, and *body-object* articulation, so that within the school, the time-table, the syllabus, and the very actions of learners served to reinforce order. Through regulation the correct use of the body was made possible, which ensured the correct use of time, and that no body remained idle or useless.

Foucault (1977: 305) used Bentham's architectural representation of the Panopticon (1977: 200), to suggest that the school could symbolically be seen as part of a single "carceral network", in which disciplinary practices in schools, hospitals, factories, the army, and prisons roughly had identical structures (Kebede 2009: 2). As such, disciplinary practices in schools were mechanisms of power, serving to instruct and 'produce' learners through the location of bodies in space and the distribution of individuals in relation to one another. Discipline in schools (to Foucault) came to be a hierarchy of organisation, a definition of the

kinds of instruments that were preferred, and the modes of power that operated in the school. Foucault (1977: 308) noted that “whole networks of processes - even minute, meticulous techniques that overlapped, repeated, and supported each other - were generated. Consequently, those networks then produced a structure that reflected the “micro-physics of power” whereby the mechanisms of ‘discipline’ were no longer applied to transgressions of laws or rules alone, but to transgressions of the “*apparatus of production - ‘commerce’ and ‘industry’ - to a whole multiplicity of illegalities*”.

Foucault (1977:32) noted that it was through normalisation and surveillance that ‘discipline’ became an anonymous power and that within schools, such authority functioned in largely unidentified and unspecified, but no less dominant ways.

4.3.2 Inter-personal relationships

For Foucault, power was situated in various forms of domination and subordination; individuals thus not being as important as were their bodies. Control operated through the impersonal, individual body and the knowledge that was generated by such relationships of power.

Foucault (1977: 151) identified a whole series of subsidiary authorities (and those responsible for ‘surveillance’) that augmented the sovereign power or authoritative control of the state. Power was no longer only in the hands of the state or its officials, but also in the hands of professionals (educators, educational psychologists, and managers) within schools.

As such, the relationship between educator and learner was regarded as an ironically *reciprocal* one; namely one of disciplinary “coercion” and “strict subjection” (Foucault 1977:138). In such a relationship, the teacher conducted constant supervision (under pressure of observation by supervisors himself) in order to ensure and facilitate the implementation of “totally useful time” and “time of good quality” (Foucault 1977: 150-151). The educator was cast in the role of “master of discipline” (Foucault 1977: 166) and became a functional cog in the binary of surveillance and knowledge of individuals.

In terms of discipline, the learner had practically no meaning or role, other than being an individualised body that was routinely subjected to a network of relations and punishments for order to prevail. Moreover, within the educational space of the school, there was a distribution of individual bodies according to rank and grade that established a hierarchy of qualities, skills and aptitudes that were disciplinary in function and represented an order of

judgement (publicly displayed by prefect badges, honorary scrolls, blazers of merit), as well as the establishment of a precise system of command (Foucault 1977: 166).

4.3.3 Relationships of power

Foucault's theories were particularly meaningful for the study; particularly the concept of "power-knowledge", and how the bodies of individuals were only seen as useful when they were subjected and productive (Foucault 1977: 26). From my reading of Foucault, I deduced that discipline in schools was derived from the triangulation of *surveillance*, *normalising judgements*, and the *management* of the bodies of individuals.

Discipline was furthermore reflected in the ranking of individuals within institutions, especially if this task was fulfilled by professionals. As Foucault (1997: 304) noted:

Borne along by the omnipresence of the mechanisms of discipline, the judges of *normality* are present everywhere", in the form of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the psychiatrist-judge, the 'social worker'-judge.

It is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based. Each individual subjects to normativity his body. In modern society, the carceral network has the greatest support from the normalising power of institutions.

4.4 Pierre Bourdieu

According to Hirschfield (2008: 22), *structural factors* shape disciplinary trends not only through shifting laws and policies, but also through exerting direct influence on *individual actors* operating at the level of the school and in the classroom. For the purpose of this thesis, the relationship between *structural realities* and *individual subjectivities* needed to be better understood.

As far as such *structural realities* were concerned, while Foucault explained how the dual aspects of *technologies* and *operative structures* of disciplinary power worked, Durkheim emphasised the generalised *social context* (or *moral foundations*) in which disciplinary configurations were grounded,

In terms of *individual subjectivity*, I found reading the works of Pierre Bourdieu most helpful, especially his ideas on the relation between structure and agency and the status of the subject within social structures. In his concern about the established social order (and education in particular) and how order was reproduced, Bourdieu (as cited by Calhoun 1992:3), asserted that:

Social life must be understood in terms that do justice to both objective material, social and cultural structures and to the constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups.

Bourdieu identified *education* as one of the main fields in modern society that reproduced social order. He noted however that the objectivity of the educationally structured *field* always needed to be contrasted with the subjective, personal disposition of the *agent* in response to his encounters within and of such a field.

According to Bourdieu & Passeron (1990: 87) how different learners thought about education (and discipline) required the complex combination of individual capitals, social class, and everyday social factors in their lives to be better understood. In this regard, Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *habitus*, and *capital* offered a theoretical lens through which the relationships between economic and cultural issues in the lives of learners, and the ways they understood their lives could be conceptualised. In identifying these concepts, it was affirmed that an individual's life events could not be understood fully, unless in relation to the social context in which actions occurred (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* also illustrated how internalised social structures and dispositions were unconsciously developed from an early age and given particular form in the lives of individuals by being reproduced through their everyday experiences (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990, Bourdieu 2002). Various backgrounds and social interactions ensured that learners developed unique and distinct attitudes, dispositions, and value systems, which depended on the various social networks that individual learners could call upon. According to Moore (2008: 108), this produced not only diverse understandings of education (for example, of aspects like 'discipline') but also unequal ways to "navigate different social spaces".

Furthermore, Bourdieu (2002) emphasised how *economic capital* and *social class* enabled certain practices and experiences, through which learners 'translated' their lived experiences into embodied dispositions and capacities (in the form of *cultural capital*). As a result, various learners would negotiate different social spaces, like those within schools, differently.

4.4.1 Procedural and situational confines

Lande, in his abstract, "*Drive on: how soldiers embody ethical dispositions*" (<http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/wacquant>), argued that a lived sense of ethics in time comes to define distinctive patterns and practices of discipline. For example, the soldier's ethic, with its emphasis on the incorporation of disciplinary practices and the transformation

of the body, creates a moral world in which a responsible, dependable, and honourable self can be cultivated.

It is in this sense of *procedural and situational confines* that I understood Bourdieu's concept of *field*. According to Bourdieu's theory, a *field* is a structured social space with its own rules and schemes of domination and *fields* had to be seen as largely autonomous from the wider social structure. In this instance, Hirschfield (2008: 14- 15) points to three distinct, yet interlocking *fields* in modern schools:

- strict Codes of Conduct that governed both the behaviour of learners and their orderly movement, and the formalisation of punishments of digression;
- school punishment that increasingly based itself on uniform and procedural guidelines that evolved around the nature of the identified offence, rather than what school managers and educators thought was acceptable; and
- school policies and practices that were mandated as laws, thus criminalising transgressions of school rules.

Paradoxically, the *field* existed only in so far as social agents acting within such a field inculcated the dispositions (what Wacquant [2005: 14] referred to as a “set of perceptual schemata”) necessary to constitute that field and imbue it with meaning. The concept of *field*, according to Bourdieu (cited in Lingard & Christie, 2003: 322), was that of a “structured social space and force field that contained people that dominated and people that were dominated”. Within contained spaces, enduring relationships of inequality existed alongside daily attempts to challenge or transform such spaces, and thus a field, in the words of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:7) became:

simultaneously a space of conflict and competition in which participants vied to establish monopoly over the species of effective capital in it.

Hirschfield (2008: 22-24) states that, like Durkheim and Foucault, Bourdieu identified punishment as a mechanism that *socialised* learners. Those that fell outside the traditional disciplinary paradigm had to be reconciled with the prevailing social order within that particular field. This *force field* imposed specific determinations on all those that entered, and consequently became a *battle field* wherein the basis of identity and hierarchy was endlessly disputed (Hirschfield 2008: 18-19).

Using the metaphor of ‘a game’, Bourdieu referred to the *field* as the given boundaries within which combatants contested according to given sets of rules. The school fulfilled a particular

function by framing and legitimizing knowledge that was considered important for the reproduction and replication of a particular and dominant societal view, and discriminated in favour of those who knew how to ‘play the game and win the prize’, excluding those that ‘did not know’ or those who did not follow ‘the rules of the game’ (Pakulski & Tranter, 2000; Tranter 2004: 7 - 18).

Crucially, Bourdieu noted that a number of *fields* could be in operation at any one time, and that different actions could take place within each of these fields of interactions - with continuing inequalities in relationships and with different struggles to control the resources available. Interestingly, in all fields, those that ‘gained’ access to and controlled the key resources were deemed to be “disciplined”. For the thesis, a variety of fields (home, school, classroom, the playground) operated to inform how the learners thought about discipline. Each field had a historically, politically, and socially defined context in which learners, their friends, their families, and communities were differently positioned to behave in ways that respond to the logics of power that maintained the structure of the field that they inhabited (Thomson, 2008:70).

4.4.2 Inter-personal relationships

Bourdieu further developed the concept of *habitus* to explain the paradox of ‘objectifying the subjective’. *Habitus* could be seen as an agent’s system of dispositions; as resilient, acquired schemes of perceptions, thoughts, and actions.

It was a system of “lasting transposable dispositions rooted in early familial socialization” (Parsons, Adler and Kaczala 1982). Holt (2008: 228) asserted that the habitus acquired in the family was perhaps the root from which other habituses - such as that in the school - drew upon. Importantly, individuals took up different habituses and often reorganized these as they interacted within the different environments of their everyday lives.

In this regard, learners contained within themselves both their past and present understandings of their place within social structures, as well as the dispositions that marked out their various social positions (Bourdieu, 1990: 82). If a learner for example was disciplined or punished in the past, this would fashion that learner’s perception of disciplinary structures and what function he thought it had. Conversely, being ‘disciplined’ often led to disillusionment and the consequent development of alternative views of what constituted discipline.

Bourdieu (1990: 77) noted that the habitus was a system of particular dispositions that led to certain practices or regular behaviour, and to learners behaving in particular ways in given circumstances. While individual practices were mostly unpredictable or difficult to predict, the concept of habitus highlighted how particular cultural orientations, personal trajectories and the ability to ‘play the game’ of social interaction shaped learner thinking, approaches, and applications (Calhoun *et al* 1993:4).

According to Reay (2004:433), *habitus* could be seen as a transformational mechanism which led learners to “reproduce the social conditions of their own production; but often in very unpredictable ways”. Habitus could both raise or lower individual expectations, and chart a social trajectory that enabled conditions of living that were very different from the initial ones.

Habitus was also often “built upon contradiction, upon tension, and even upon instability” (Bourdieu 1990: 116) that was not merely about the smooth incorporation of static social structures but rather (in the words of Lingard and Christie, 2003:321) necessitated learners to be “perpetually thinking about, challenging, or even reconfiguring the co-ordinates according to which they lived”.

According to Horvat (2003), the notion of habitus provided a useful mechanism to uncover learners’ subconscious, internalized sense of accessibility to educational opportunity and the processes of improvisation that they underwent within the confines of their social realities. If a learner had little or no access to certain opportunities, it would limit his chances of successfully achieving his goals. In this regard, Horvat (2003) further asserts that learner habitus was a by-product of family and individual history that connected learners to aspects of their social class and background, the social context in which they grew up, the aspirations they were exposed to, and the capitals that they possessed or had developed.

In this respect, Bourdieu, like Foucault, emphasised the corporeal - the *body* of the agent - and its capacity for learning through assimilation and modification. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 127) stated that it was through “appreciation and action that resulted from the institution of the social in the body” that agents were able to engage with not only their own lived realities, but also the world of others.

It is in this sense that Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* is of importance to the discussion of ‘discipline’ in my thesis:

Once the agent has absorbed the prevailing social structure into his personal set of cognitive and somatic dispositions, and has acted thereupon, *doxa* emerges. *Doxa* is explained as the set of fundamental, self-evident, and deep-founded beliefs that inform a particular agent's actions and thoughts within a particular field. (<http://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-5/pierre-bourdieu-on-cultural-capital>)

As *habitus* and the resultant *doxa* were central to both the generation and regulation of those practices that made up social life, it thus followed that these dominant structures were upheld by systems of law, and in the case of schools, by school rules.

4.4.3 Relationships of power

Bourdieu's investigative frameworks, pioneering the concepts of *social*, *economic*, and *cultural capital* and *symbolic violence*, explained the dynamics of power relations in social life, and emphasised the role of the above notions in educational practice (Wacquant 2005). According to Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992: 119), *capital* can be described as:

the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Capital was a crucial source of power, as it represented a scheme of *classification*. It followed that to be grouped *within* the acceptable schemata of a field became desirable to all agents acting therein. Cushion (2006: 145) explained that *capital* could occur in a number of forms: *economic* (that which can be immediately and directly converted to money), *cultural* (such as educational or professional credentials), *social* (such as position and connections within society), *symbolic* (relating to honour and prestige) and *physical* (the development of the body in ways recognised as having value). The agent's position within a field was then defined in relation to his access to the relevant form - or forms - of capital. Bourdieu's notions of *capital* are important to my understanding and examination of discipline and punishment within the field represented by Avondale High. It provides understandings of implicit hierarchical systems utilised by learners, which may be contrary to those of educators, thus impacting on efforts to exert domination and power in the form of discipline.

When a holder of certain *capitals* used these to 'triumph' over an agent who held less, and sought thereby to alter the action of the lesser agent, *symbolic violence* was being exercised. *Symbolic violence* was thus often unspoken and implicit, but was nevertheless powerfully coercive. It imposed perceptions and ideas upon dominated agents, who then accepted the *status quo* to be the more desirable way of living. Cushion (2006: 145) asserts that:

Symbolic violence is in some senses much more powerful than physical violence in that it is embedded in the very modes of action and structures of cognition of individuals, and imposes the spectre of legitimacy of the social order.

The concept of *symbolic violence* explains how order and restraint may be exercised and maintained through indirect mechanisms, as opposed to direct, coercive control. Furthermore, an understanding of this concept provides a useful description of existing relations of power at the school in this study, Avondale High School.

Bourdieu's concepts provide insights as to how learners draw on their respective capitals in 'acting back' within the field of Avondale.

4.5 Conclusion

The theories above, and the perspectives provided, offer views of discipline as multi-faceted and contradictory; perspectives that assist enormously in better engaging with the insights of 13 local Grade 9-learners.

I was quite fascinated when I met with Avondale High learners and found the complex ways in which they conceived of, and engaged with school discipline and the school structures that upheld order. These engagements are conceptualised, analysed, and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

AVONDALE AND DISCIPLINE – THE YOUTH TALK BACK

Sometimes children can find the solutions, which adults cannot find.

YouTube (30 Mar 2010)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on what the learners at Avondale High said about discipline at their school and how they made sense of its role in their schooling and their lives. I highlight their viewpoints and voices in relation to the three areas that I explored in Chapter 4, namely the *procedural and situational confines* of their experience of discipline at Avondale High, the *interpersonal relationships* that they developed in relation to such experiences, and the kinds of *relationships of power* that shaped how they thought about discipline.

In doing so I emphasise two concepts utilised by Spierenburg (1984: viii), namely *spectacle* and *repression*, to show how discipline at the school fulfils a role that is more than simply ‘keeping the school population in line’. Spierenburg applies the concept of ‘repression’ to show how discipline works as a set of conventions, procedures and policies of control, and notes that the ways in which discipline continues to be produced and revered in modern society is through the enactment of ‘the spectacle’. Spierenburg (1984) suggests that different kinds of meaning are made through the drama of discipline (and suffering), where authority is critiqued at the same time as discipline appears to valorise it. Within such a process both learners and educators are drawn into a powerful participatory relationship that develops a shared - even if opposing - meaning of what they experienced.

I question in the chapter what better way there is to extend the reach of discipline than to hide behind the power of aliases like the need for ‘individual responsibility’, the ‘collective interests’ of society, and the ‘best interests of the child’. Through discipline, dominant ways of doing things were codified into the temporal and spatial *milieu* of the school and the movement of those that inhabited it (Foucault 1977: 137).

The learner viewpoints regarding discipline in the chapter below outline the navigational strategies that they employed in their engagement with issues of discipline and punishment at Avondale High. I present these views according to the following sections, namely:

- the learners’ engagement with structures of discipline within the confines of the school as *setting*;

- their interactions on *interpersonal levels* of habitus; and
- their dialogues (as individual agents) with relationships of *power*.

5.2 *The setting of Avondale as battlefield*

5.2.1 **Learner engagements within the *field* of Avondale**

Garland (2001b: 87) describes how, for the last few decades, the push for democracy and egalitarianism has extended beyond the political sphere into other domains, like schools, “with major consequences for authority and control *in these settings*” (my italics).

The fear of risk and disorder in South Africa, and the supposed need to put in place mechanisms of regulation, has brought into being what Comaroff regards as “a politics aimed at making manifest both the shape of the nation and a form of institutional power capable of underwriting its ordered existence” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 804). The way in which this has emerged within society has often been through a ‘theatrical display’ of ‘performed discipline’ where the power exerted by different communities or institutions is made visible, tangible, and accountable, and where the focus is on making it effective for (and accepted by) the community it serves (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 805).

At Avondale High School, learners identified the setting of the school - even its very *name* - as synonymous with strict policies of control and strong ‘discipline’. The school is known within surrounding school circles and communities as “*that strict school*” and learners often referred to it as “*a jail*”. This has symbolically given the school somewhat of a reputation as practicing what is seen as ‘old fashioned discipline’, resonating with feelings of archaic and incomprehensible rules, but supposedly needed given ‘the state of disorder amongst youth’.

In this respect, the school can be seen as a *field* (in the Bordieuan sense): a dynamic social arena where exchanges and struggles take place and within which there is a very defined and grounded set of rules, which educators and learners contest. It is common parlance at the school though that sooner or later (usually by the end of Grade 10) that the Weberian notion of usurpation (Roberts 2009: 261) will have ensued, with the ‘Avondale magic’ starting to work with learners ‘buying into’ the ethos of the school.

For many learners at Avondale, accustomed to their own *agency* as modern teenagers have come to be, the uncompromising discipline at the school leads to the deepest frustration. Fawwas noted that:

People can't express their real selves, so they are all real angry and stuff like that and people go, "Why?" and they say, "No. I just can't handle the rules at the school. I just can't listen to it anymore!" and they take it out on their parents or you hit your brother or stuff like that. I don't want to break the rules on purpose, but I want to be myself. (Interview 1: 4)

As far as the function of the school and its inherent structure, it seemed to focus on being one that sought to *socialise* and *normalise* (Foucault 1977) as well as to repress (Spierenburg 1984) untoward behaviour. Marc offered a particularly sobering analysis of what he regarded as an overly authoritarian structure:

At our school, I think they go overboard, as they try to be completely controlling of what's going on and try to make *everything* go their way – which wouldn't work in any society.

If I think of 'discipline', I think of children misbehaving and teachers trying to correct that – even sometimes using inappropriate methods to correct the child's behaviour. The school sees what's going on, and they think about how they can stop it. For example, they see there is noise in the passages, so they make everyone line up on opposite sides of the school, so that we lead in orderly. Or, the teacher will see someone is talking in class, and he will send that person outside.

The discipline measures are a kind of reaction to what has happened at the school, to prevent it from happening again. Discipline is a kind of process, growing and changing all the time. (Interview 2: 3)

In such a space, according to Adrian, direct engagement with the existing disciplinary system was often *evaded*:

Learners also find many ways to circumvent these rules, to get around them – they actually make their own space, so to speak. (Interview 7:1)

Adrian noted that learners worked out what they each needed to do and decided how to respond in their own individualised ways:

There's also a bit of rebellion I *do* have, but I try to hide it, to bury it... I think I have to try and do this, because this way there'll be less pain and suffering than the route which I actually do take... I consciously choose to "bury" my rebellious side for the time being, because *at the moment* conforming is my choice.

Although you might not see me here at the school as a "naughty" child, I have the potential to do very bad things. I just *choose* not to. I could bring a lighter to school, but I just don't see the point; it doesn't interest me. The sooner I can get done here, the sooner I can get to my higher education and the sooner I can go out into the world.

It might be that those who don't think that far are actually the ones who then bring that lighter to school? (Interview 7: 2 – 3)

Similarly, Chantelle reasoned that learners adapted to the rules as developed individual strategies not because they agreed with them or liked them, but because it was simply better to adhere to them:

I think I have developed my own way here at Avondale. At first, when I came here, I didn't really like it because of all the rules. I used to come to school late, but I have learnt to wake up half an hour earlier to get done and avoid the Grade Head detention for being late.

I'm not a total "goody-goody": I'll also sometimes speak or pass a note – I will only break those small, unimportant rules. I think I will break a small rule if it prevents me from having a little fun, depending on if it's the kind of fun that won't hurt other people. You can't just sit still all the time, and you don't really hurt anybody by breaking the unimportant rules. If the teacher starts looking, I just pass the note quickly. I will talk quickly and very softly, and when she's looking, I will keep quiet and pretend I never did anything.

But the bigger rules, like those against smoking or taking drugs – there are good reasons to have those! (Interview 13: 3)

Steven's approach was a refinement of the traditional 'fight-or-flight' strategy. He made use of the dual tactic of *humour* and being *unobtrusive*:

Yes, since Grade 8 I have worked out a special way, to get around here. I get around at school by not being serious. (He laughs loudly.) The kids laugh at the things I do - all the time. It looks like they find the fact that I disregard the discipline amusing and fun.

If I know I'll get in trouble in class because I didn't do my homework, I'll just keep quiet, so that the ma'am won't notice me. If I carry on and everything, Ma'am will see me and even ask for my Maths book, like Mrs Fisher did. So, if I know I'll get into trouble, because I didn't do my homework or because I was misbehaving, I'll just sit down and do my work and keep a low profile. It works really well! (Interview 9: 2)

While acknowledging a silent apprehension of school discipline, many of the learners also expressed great support and satisfaction with the focus on upholding present rules and processes of discipline at Avondale High. Within the dynamic *field* of the school, they claimed to experience discipline as a familiar and reassuring structure that protected and comforted them, and within which they could with confidence negotiate school life as a way of ensuring successful futures. Garth noted that:

The discipline here hasn't changed much – the discipline has been very *high*, even since I've been in Grade 8. It hasn't really changed. The rules are a way of life at this school. I have nothing against the rules. It's like I've said: if you go by them, then nothing happens. You can have a great time in this school.

People know me: I definitely stand out because I'm always supporting the rules. They don't expect bad things of me - people know me as listening and obeying. It makes me feel comfortable as a person and I know what the boundaries are. (Interview 3: 2 – 3)

Leigh-Ann expresses her full support for the school's *status quo* as follows:

I have a good feeling about the rules. The rules make me feel safe, and secure in my classes because I know if I listen to the rules, I'll be okay. You know that some

people will want to fight? But here, we are not allowed to fight, so if someone wants to fight with you because of a stupid reason, you will feel secure, because you know that person will get into serious trouble. I know the sir will stand up and protect me with the rules here.

Well, the detention they give you now for coming late at lines, gives me a kind of good feeling, because now children will come to lines in time - there has been a huge improvement! Children make sure they have all their buttons on their blazers, that they don't dye their hair. The discipline here has been developed into quite a successful system. I do think I will obey the rules and go with the rules. It's been my choice to create a kind of relationship with the rules; that I listen and obey; it makes me happy. The rules keep you like in a safe space. (Interview 5: 3)

Some learners also regarded school disciplinary structures and rules as important to their academic success at the school. Nomathembi reasoned that the rules were meaningful and functional and enhanced those life skills that she perceived as necessary in her future:

Nobody *likes* rules. Instead of forgetting and then always doing something wrong, I tend to try and do the right thing. I interact with the rules by obeying them, because I know it will be to my advantage, both now and in my future one day. The rules have had a good influence on me. As I am going along, I will find that the rules are what actually builds the school and what builds us, being the people that we are. When we go to Grade 11 and 12 we will be the seniors of the school and then we have to be developed and we have to set the example.

You have to show that by the time you're in Grade 12 that the rules have actually helped because you can stay on track and study with no distractions. The rules will definitely help you to adapt better at university or where you are going to work, 'cos the rules will be there too! (She laughs.) The rules won't be the same, but there will always be a rule. You'll know how to obey a rule, why it is important to do so, and how to go about with the rules. (Interview 8: 5)

Learners also spoke about how discipline elicited emotional and psychological responses from them, and connected it to their schooling. Steven, one of the learners who by his own admission had an extensive disciplinary record at the school, observed the following:

I was actually surprised that following the rules made me feel better. The best thing ever must be that I actually passed Maths - it's the first time I've ever passed Maths. In that term I didn't fight with the teacher; there were only a few days that I came to class late. There was no fighting, no shouting and the teacher didn't nag at me... Here, our discipline helps us to do so well academically.

I think the reason for the discipline is for us, for later in life. It will help us to make the good choices, not always the bad choices. You take me; I think I've improved a lot since Grade 8. I'm not so loud in class anymore and I don't throw stuff at people any more. I'm not all that disciplined yet, but in the back of my mind, I know that I will be - say, maybe in Matric, I'll toe the line. At least, I'll have a fun and (an) interesting time until then! (He laughs.) (Interview 9: 4 – 5)

Even within a relatively small sample of 13 Grade 9-learners at Avondale High, the one feature that stood out was the quite *dissimilar* engagements with the notion of discipline at

the school. According to Garland (2001b: 203), this is unsurprising and demonstrates that there are no singular or alike interpretations of what constitutes control and order; given that individuals with quite different perspectives and life experiences are involved. Furthermore, Garland (2001b: 203) states:

As we have seen, the cumulative choices of individuals make a difference and form the basis upon which social structures emerge.

5.2.2 Changing forms of punishment

Spierenburg's *The Spectacle of Suffering* (1984) provides a historical analysis of the development of the criminal justice and the formation of modes of repressions by the state. In the book the author focused on the historical change of mentalities regarding repression as a system of control. He identified a shift in what Norbert Elias (as cited by Spierenburg 1984: ix) called "conscience formation" and the *move away from physical punishment*, as well as a *decline of its public character*.

The value of Spierenburg's work to the study of school discipline at a school like Avondale High is twofold: on the one hand it asks important questions about what happens when procedures of punishment (like corporal punishment) are abolished and what processes emerge in its place. On the other hand, it questions and problematises what the roles and functions of the new processes are.

NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AT AVONDALE HIGH

Ever since 1994, there has been a clear and marked retreat from physical punishment at Avondale. Not only did this shift in approach regarding physical punishment reflect global and local sentiment (as reflected in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 19, Section 1 and Article 28, Section 7; Article 11.5 [<http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights-overview>], Article 16 of the *African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child* [www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/afchildratifications.html] and Section 12 of the *South African Constitution* [www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/a108-96.pdf]), but it was in accordance with the national legislation of 1996 on the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, as dictated by the *South African Schools Act* (1996) (Porteus 2001: 6).

As cited by Spierenburg (1984: 5), Achter considered the element of moral disapproval to be perhaps the key essence of all systems of punishment. During the interviews, I found a number of learners voicing surprisingly condemnatory viewpoints of modern-day systems of punishment and calling for some form of corporal punishment to be re-instated. This

surprised me, as these learners had never experienced corporal punishment of any kind throughout their school careers, and yet ‘waxed lyrical’ about its value. Adrian for example perceived the existing rules and regulations at Avondale as ineffective and called for stricter and more intimidating control:

I don’t think that our discipline is admirable or effective. People here at school don’t fear it. I once was involved with someone breaking my glasses – supposedly accidentally. I want somebody *punished* and punished in such a way that they will live with it and think, “No, I don’t want to go back to that.” It must be like a prison of sorts. Really, what you should try and do is to get them to the point where they will not do that again.

You’re asking people to write out the Code of Conduct, when in truth, you’re trying to *punish* them. The Code of Conduct is not a tool of punishment – and writing it out is simply boring. I would suggest they bring back the spanking and caning and such, but that would not be allowed. So, the school should just find a more effective way to instil respect and even some fear in these children! I suggest changing the punishment every ten years to keep the “fear” of it alive. Otherwise they get bored with it, and they get stories from their parents and think, “This is nonsense; it’s pathetic, how can this hurt us?”

The school must have ways that really *punish*, but not in either a physical hurtful or a tormenting way; it must only instil *fear*. I’m saying the school must modernise its punishment. It would be brilliant to, for example, confiscate their cell phones or certain things that they use every day. Take away the things they like: let them pay a fine; take away privileges, like not using the tuck shop. You can also ban them from taking part in a sport, but then many people actually don’t like doing sport. Quite frankly, modern children hate being singled out; they find it humiliating. You can “name and shame”...

You will have to find something that everybody dislikes: you have to find one similarity that nobody will be able to live without. You can easily find out: ask the learners – do a consensus, but don’t mention what it’s for!”

I associate “discipline” presently with an hour-long stint of boredom; with a pencil and writing out - and a detention slip. I don’t associate the word discipline with respect or even fear. (Interview 7: 3 – 4)

In Adrian’s latter point he notes how learners have to sit in detention and do nothing and this form of punishment was far worse than physical punishment. Ayesha highlighted how the confines of the practice offended her at the personal level, and how it intimidated her sensibilities.

I think Avondale’s like a concentration camp! You just sit there in Grade Head detention, doing absolutely nothing. You stare at the board – that’s what they told me when I asked around. In prefects’ detention, you write out, but in Grade Head your punishment is to do *nothing*. It feels like you’re in prison and it eats away at your head – I’m sure it’s as if you’re going mad. (Interview 12: 4)

However, Ayesha also paradoxically supported the development of more effective deterrents, especially for those that she regarded as disruptive “naughty”:

Way back, when they still hit the children, pain was associated with punishment. The naughty kids knew that if they did something bad, they would feel the pain. I’m not sure, but I think that’s also how people nowadays intend the punishment to be?

Those very naughty kids that get more and more Grade Head detentions just don’t feel that “pain” any more. Surely then it’s pointless having a Grade Head detention system? They must re-examine our punishment and even ask the learners. (Interview 12: 4)

Again, the latter observation is not surprising given the multi-faceted and complex nature of the institution of punishment and the diverse meanings it has come to play in the lives of learners (Garland 1990:2).

PUNISHMENT AS PUBLIC DISPLAY AT AVONDALE HIGH

Spierenburg (1984) has shown how the practice of punishment slowly vanished from the public eye and view as societies modernised. Foucault (1977) then demonstrated how the theatricality of punishment in pre-modern society gave way to more internalised and implicit kinds of discipline that were then used to regulate everyday life and enforce disciplinary mechanisms.

I would like to suggest that some of the ‘theatrics’ of the past is returning, that discipline is no longer hidden or half-hearted, and that its main purpose in contemporary society is to bring polarising and conflicting sides and forces together to generate a set of ‘common, legible, operative, and co-existing values’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 805). ‘The spectacle’ serves as a populist fantasy of law and order where learners, educators and policy makers imagine a social order driven by heroic action in the cause of a greater moral good (Garland 1990; Comaroff & Comaroff 2004: 806).

At Avondale High School there were a number of activities that *retained* the character of *public spectacle*. These activities were integral to the school’s organization and served to identify and publicise the function of discipline as ‘general prevention’. One particular activity that served as a useful example of ‘spectacle in the public eye’ at Avondale was the ‘punishment’ of learners who whispered, spoke, or misbehaved in assembly. In front of the whole school, those learners were removed to the back of the hall where they were instructed to face the back wall and remain standing for the duration of the assembly. At other times, transgressors were publicly identified over the school intercom system in being told to report to the Head of Discipline at the school and such learners were normally given detentions.

Repeat offenders received detention on Saturdays and were forced to attend school in their full uniform. This clearly marked them out at school over weekends from the other learners attending sport or other cultural activities. Everyone knew who they were and why they were there.

By keeping this disciplinary process visible in the daily public domain of the school; emphasis was placed on the moral reprehensibility of the disciplinary transgressions and the disapproval of their actions by all at Avondale. Unlike the observation of Foucault (1977) that discipline in modern society focused primarily on the individual transgressor, his traits, and the intricacies of his guilt, the identification of misbehaviour at Avondale High in the current era regularly linked and justified the need for discipline to the impact of transgressions on the school community. Very often, if one or two would misbehave, whole classes or even a whole grade would be reprimanded or punished. Different learners had different viewpoints on why they found various transgressions reprehensible. All of them, however, attached strong emotional connection to their views. Chantelle for example strongly disapproved of the behaviour of those she termed “the naughty kids”. It was clearly the transgression of *moral niceties* that she objected to.

Those kids smoke, or bring drugs to school. In class, they will throw papers or backchat the teacher. Some will write mean notes and make fun of people. They break the unimportant and the important rules of the school and they break the rules of society by hurting other people’s feelings. (Interview 13: 3)

Ayesha, on the other hand, revealed an expectation that the school would implement discipline to ensure and facilitate *academic engagement*:

For me, “disruptive” children do have their own opinions, but don’t know when or how to voice them. For instance, if a teacher and a child have different opinions, then that child might shout and say that the teacher is wrong – they will be disrespectful and all over the place. They can’t get what they want to say out, they are just making a big scene. Disruptions will happen mainly in classrooms, when the learners are all together and it’s supposed to be organised for learning. (Interview 12: 4)

Adrian referred to the disruption of learning opportunities as “morally unacceptable behaviour”. He expected the school to function as a locus of control and referred to policies and procedures in this regard:

A naughty kid would be someone who cares not for other people’s rights: someone who would completely and deliberately not listen; someone who tries to do his “own thing”; someone who quite deliberately rebels. Although rebellion, in some case, might be good, in many ways it will affect and even hurt those around you. For instance, it’s not just making noise in class as much as preventing others for learning.

If you look out for the population in general, you will lose the individual; if you look out for all sectors, you lose that part known as “education” and the young children that are at school. (Interview 7: 5)

This dialectic between free will and individual restraint at Avondale High, and the desire for greater control versus opening spaces for the individual to grow, was a key underlying force in processes of discipline and control at Avondale High. By playing out those debates in the public domain the school was able to create a language to which all at the school adhered to. Garland (2001b: 193) has referred to this ‘ebb and flow’ in the dynamics of ‘freedom’ and ‘control’ in the following way:

Where the liberating dynamic of late modernity emphasised freedom, openness, mobility and tolerance, reactionary culture stresses control, closure, confinement and condemnation. The continued enjoyment of freedoms has come to depend upon the close control of those who cannot be trusted to enjoy these freedoms

5.3 *Interactive participants: Friends and Foes*

Scahill (1993:3) has noted that in trying to find some kind of middle ground between *individual agency* and *structural determinacy*, Pierre Bourdieu developed the concept of ‘habitus’. It was about understanding how learners’ pasts and presents connected them to place and social structure, and how their dispositions and attitudes in the ‘game of social interaction’ shaped the ways they thought about, approached, and applied the notion of discipline (Calhoun, LiPuma & Postone 1993: 4).

During the interviews with learners at Avondale High it was clear that each of them manifested quite different habituses, namely socially acquired and embodied systems of dispositions and predispositions that shaped in their outlooks, opinions, and inclinations. These operated not only in relation to their social and classroom encounters with each other and with educators, but also within their pedagogical encounters.

5.3.1 *Incongruous habituses*

In *Changing contexts, shifting identities*, Dawson (2003:2) noted that school contexts (and interactions therein) have a complex relationship with the development of learner identities, and that schools play fundamental roles in providing the boundaries within which such learner identities were shaped. She states that “frictional relationships” often manifest themselves as resistance to school rules, and involved the marking out of the ‘self’ in relation to the ‘other’.

Soudien (2007: 5 – 6): similarly points to the notion that identity formation involves “active work on the part of the subject to shape his or her identity” and emphasises that, according to Erikson (1993):

The youth in all its diversities will share the common fate of wrestling with their parents over their futures. How they do so, is determined by the socio-temporal conditions in which they find themselves.

A key part of this identity making lies in how learners interact with educators and the congruency between the habituses of learners in relation to that of educators. In this regard, there is no doubt that within contemporary mass public schooling systems there was often a clear ‘mismatch’ between educator and learner habitus. Fawwas noted, for example, that it was not about him being combative that got him in trouble, but rather the obstinacy and stubbornness of his educator who simply refused to acknowledge his point of view:

Yes, they look at me as “a naughty boy”, but not ugly, not disrespectful. It’s different – they know I’m naughty, but not ugly rude. I wasn’t once rude with any teacher, just Mr Matthews. He was shouting at me so bad that my ears were sore and he was hitting the door and I’m like “What the hell? There’s no need for this! Control yourself!” and he says, “You think you’re the cool guy?” And I say, “No, I’m not”. Then he goes on and says, “But it’s time you know something. The kids come to me in class and say they need to speak to me about important stuff and they want to open up to me...” and I’m like O.K. and then Sir shouts, and I’m trying to say, but Sir thinks I’m back chatting and I’m not ... (Interview 1: 3)

Similarly, Matthew noted that educators often did not understand ‘what made learners tick’ and that sending them to detention did not scare them at all. He noted that educators needed to better understand why individual learners did things rather than simply resort to disciplinary mechanisms that did not work. Matthew observed that:

I heard something once, on a TV-show I think, that “The harder you beat a man, the taller he stands”. And I think that’s a really interesting saying, ‘cos if you go to one of the naughty children and say, “I’ll give you Detention for the rest of the term”, then he’ll just laugh at you, ‘cos it’s just detention and he doesn’t mind being regarded by the rest of the school as a “naughty” child! Then all the teachers will treat them like that and he’ll just get more attention. It’s like a kind of a compliment and that’s how they attract attention, ‘cos they’ll never be different - unless they change themselves drastically, which nowadays no child will - they’ll always be regarded as naughty. (Interview 4: 2)

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990: 12-13) has asserted that “affinities of habitus experienced as sympathy or antipathy, are the basis of all forms of co-operation”. Co-operation, however, has its limits and the desire for individual freedom invariably shapes alternative approaches and dispositions. Fawwas, for example, highlighted how he would always place his independence first, even above the need for discipline:

I can say that the discipline at this school ... it's hectic. The discipline won't make me the same as the other kids; I'll always stay myself. I wouldn't want to be one of Sir's "soldiers". I wouldn't want to be that, 'cos I have rights - so do you. I also have the right to be special even inside of all this discipline. (Interview 1: 3)

Matthew agreed with this, though rather circumspectly:

Like that Michael Smith boy: these are kids who think they can say to the teacher what they want and how they want. I always watch myself for that fine line - but I won't (if you'll excuse the term) "kiss the teacher's ass". (Interview 4:2)

While Matthew and Fawwas related how they interacted with educators, Anurah on the other hand highlighted her interaction with the school structure and how her particular habitus had been formed in her feeling 'trapped' both at home and at Avondale. Anurah noted that she was quite comfortable being treated as 'naughty' as this gave her a distinctive identity:

Sometimes I'm OK with the discipline my parents impose on me at home, but I also feel as if I'm trapped in the house. I also feel trapped by the discipline at our school. That is why I don't go to some detentions, because we can't give our side of the story. If we do, we get another detention for back chatting. So, I don't go to tell them I don't care, that they can't hurt me because it doesn't matter to me. I think that not going to detention is like kind of my answer. My naughtiness is part of who I am here at Avondale High. I like being myself and maybe I'm a little bit of a rebel... (She laughs.) (Interview 10: 1 & 4)

5.3.2 Consistent habituses

To pursue and encourage lines of synergy between the habituses of learners and with educators in today's world is difficult. Dawson (2003: 7) observes that:

The profile of most schools in South Africa is characterised by a *multitude of identities*, and each school may *respond differently* to its diverse learner population (my italics).

At Avondale High this 'synergy' was pursued via good organisational structures and the positive management of 'us' and 'them' relationships. As such, entrenched hierarchies and sets of fixed rules and guidelines were seen to create the conditions under which social relationships could safely interact and take shape. These conditions also largely (but not fully) depended on the school being able to connect the backgrounds of learners to the kinds of issues and foci highlighted by educators at the school.

Leigh-Ann's views on discipline for example were quite similar to that of her parents and educators at the school:

I don't try to be 17 and I'm not disrespectful. I listen to what my parents have to say and I try and apply their advice to the things I do, also what I do here at school. I'm happy with the school, Ma'am, and my parents too...

I always obey the rules here at school and that makes me different! There are many naughty kids; I don't know why they are like that... Maybe they need attention because they don't get attention. I don't think I want that kind of attention... (She laughs). It's been my choice to create a kind of relationship with the rules; that I listen and obey is what makes me happy. (Interview 5: 3 – 4)

Nomathembi voiced her understanding and acceptance of the school rules regarding dress at Avondale as follows:

In this area here near the school, we have morals and we know it's important how you present yourself, because the way you look is how you represent yourself and also the school. Sometimes, when we go out and it's so hot and we have to wear our blazers, and it's like 36 degrees... (She giggles). Then you see the children from other places and you look at them and you think, "Oh, I would love to be like them. Their skirts are much shorter and their shirts are hanging loose and everything's like wild and so different to us" and you really wish to be like them.

But then, as you become older, you realise you have to present yourself properly and you learn. You suddenly realise that being "wild" is not neat and it's not lady-like at all and in terms of the guys, I'm talking about them being proper, as well. Here, they also hate the ties and the blazers having to be worn the whole year, but at the end of the day, we know that here we are being taught for the future.

When you are older, you will have to be able to present yourself really well if you want to get that better job! There is a huge difference between areas and schools: I don't like all our rules and discipline, but I can sure understand that I'll be advantaged in the end! I know the longer, better way is through my education; this is the way I am following. (Interview 8: 2)

Finally, Adrian highlighted a key dichotomy within notions of discipline, namely that obedience to the rules did not necessarily mean that learners agreed with or accepted the rules. Adrian exerted his agency in ways that worked in particular ways for him and that shaped his habitus and identity:

One thing that I have not said about the rules is that despite the fact that they don't affect us much, they do contain valuable pointers for life. These rules are but a fraction of the rules and laws that we will be confronted with once we leave school. We are children; we're still growing - in more than one way!

Yes, the rules will affect me, because unlike other children, I choose to learn from them. I choose to accept that they are there for a reason and I use them to my advantage. I have chosen to obey, but my obedience does not necessarily mean my acceptance – I keep my rebellious nature in check. At the moment, I might be considered a "model citizen", but in this place I do find the rules... stifling. When I grow older, I might question them but I still won't want to waste my time dealing with the repercussions.

I have made a choice: it's intellectual; it's cognitive. I have special relationship with the rules: I am OK with them, but only because that's how I have chosen to be. (Interview 7: 5)

5.4 The battle for power

Bandman, as cited by Freeman (2005: 56-57), has argued that “human rights enable us to stand with dignity (if necessary) to demand what is our due without having to grovel, plead or beg”. Which structures do learners utilise to demand and ensure that their rights are upheld?

5.4.1 Human Rights as basis of power

For this study, perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of ‘human rights’ is that the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (specifically Article 12) (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights-overview>) fully recognises the rights of children to have a say in processes affecting their lives; thus implying also that they might do what is ‘wrong’ in the eyes of adults. While youth take risks and make mistakes, a key responsibility on the part of adults is to take children’s rights seriously and respect their autonomy.

However, having rights also imply accepting responsibility and more often than not difficulties arise when learners do not find the proper balance in exercising their rights in responsible ways. Freeman (2005: 62 - 63) suggests employing the concept of “liberal paternalism” as a kind of safeguard in order to uphold the rights of the child. He argues that the goal would be to rationally recognise the independence of the young, but also to develop some constraints to ensure that children safely develop their capacities within protected and secure environments.

In this regard, “school discipline is perhaps one of the most contentious topics in education” (To 2006: 779) and there are no easy answers for the complex situations in which educators and learners often find themselves. Learners have clear views about what their rights entail but these are often counter-balanced by ‘the modes of action’ and ‘structures of cognition that exist in particular contexts’ and the ways in which ‘the social order is legitimised and sanctioned’ (Cohen 2001: 145).

Adrian observed that:

I think that all the “rights”, all the new clauses in the Bill of Rights, the children’s rights – the entire idea of “human Rights” has gone into our system of punishment so much that it’s lower to the point of being ineffective. It doesn’t “draw blood”.

The laws of the country have influenced the rules at our school. The government is looking out for the interests of everyone, but what they are not looking out for is the individual child. Have they not noticed that education is deteriorating; that discipline is deteriorating? Everything is deteriorating with all these “rights”. Despite the fact that having rights is good, in many cases it also is bad. (Interview 7:4)

5.4.2 Power as “normalising”

According to Covaleskie (1993: 39 - 40), educators in schools are situated at the very centre of the “web of disciplinary power” and *discipline* is often translated into terms of control and power. He further notes that:

As Willis describes in *Learning to Labour*, and as Foucault would predict, the school becomes a site of resistance and outright rebellion precisely because it is a site of power.

Avondale High is indeed a site of both power and rebellion. Learners speak out against the Foucauldian view of adult power as a *mechanism of dominance and ‘normalisation’*; it is also against those self-same ‘systems of control’ that learners act out their resistance.

I found Ayesha’s quiet determination to speak her mind quite admirable, especially taking into account that she had only been back in the country for a year when interviewed (after a lengthy stay in the Middle East):

With the teachers, I listen but I still have my own opinion. If I don’t agree with what the teacher says or the form of punishment that the teacher will give (this is not just to me, but to everybody else), then I’ll speak up. For example, if somebody in our class is punished but it wasn’t that person’s fault and the teacher will punish that person unnecessarily, I will tell the teacher in a polite way (not shouting) that the teacher was wrong. I know that choosing the right *time* to tell the teacher is important, or the teacher will think you are disrespectful. I will go after class, because you don’t want to do it in front of everybody. I have done it already, Ma’am, and the teacher understood that my opinion was different from hers. I was proud of myself, for doing this in a mature way. We have a better relationship now: I can voice my opinions and talk to her easily.

I work with the rules here at school, but within those rules I won’t let them intrude on my individuality. I’m not saying that I’ve *never* broken a rule here – who doesn’t ever break a rule? It’s against the rules to backchat the teacher, but sometimes you have to do that and break the rule, so that fairness can be upheld. I’ll break a rule if I must do so to prove that someone is innocent. (Interview 12: 3)

Anurah observes those in positions of power, and acts out her resistance in a unobtrusively defiant way. She rebels against conformity by carefully exercising her personal choice:

The teachers and the prefects are responsible for the discipline. I think they enjoy giving us punishment. They kind of look for reasons; especially the prefects. They look you up and down to find something wrong...

But not all the teachers are these “discipline” people; only some. Take Ms Struwig: because she always blames me and looks for reasons to punish me, so sometimes I decide to *give* her a reason! I go around the rules by transgressing the small little rules, but I do try to follow the more important rules. I like doing certain things, like chewing bubble gum, so I keep on doing those things that I like, even if I know it’s against the rules. I don’t mind breaking the rules if it goes against what I like. It

matters to me to know that I did something that *I* wanted to do... If my parents or somebody asks me for a reason why I broke the rule, then I can say it was because of something I *wanted* to do. (Interview 10: 2 & 5)

Kevin's experience of *normalising* power at Avondale was a far more serious issue for him. While he openly conceded that breaking the rules in the past had often placed him in uncomfortable situations, he felt that conformity was what bothered him most and that he would always try to be different. However, he argued that he was slowly 'normalising' to what was expected of him:

At the moment, all the teachers are telling me that I'm on thin ice because of my naughtiness and the naughty friends that I'm with. The one thing I know for sure, is that there where I am, there will be trouble. I don't know why. I think it's better than last year, but I find it hard to obey the rules. I get really angry that I have to listen, just listen all the time.

It's funny, this thing with the prefects. With some, you can talk and sort it out. But sometimes, three of them will come and say "Detention! Detention for you! We want to get rid of this boy." Or teachers; they put you alone in your own world and they tell you, "Ja, it's children like you that we want to get rid of out of this school, because you make our school look like a bad place." I know that I can't really say it's unfair, but it is in a way. The teachers don't see you for yourself here; everybody is the same to them.

I know it's funny for me to say this and that about discipline. The school has given me so many chances because of my naughtiness. But I have learnt and I have become smarter and I try to behave. (Interview 11: 5)

Most of the interviewees in the project spoke at length about the kinds of punishment at Avondale that were aimed at eradicating or eliminating squeezing the learners' individuality. They argued that as educators acted to impose control, learners were normally forced to act in ways that they would rather not. Many interviewees claimed that it was only logical then that learners would resist and rebel, and those they would do so with impunity if needed. In this regard, Anurah noted that:

The rules kind of take away our individuality. We all look exactly the same, and we have to act the same, so the rules don't give us any identity. Oh, yes - the identical bags: I hate the bags! And covering the books: no pictures or nice wrapping paper; just boring old brown paper and plastic all the time; all the same... It's funny, but maybe I would rather get detention than lose my opinion. (Interview 10: 5)

5.4.3 Power as "symbolic violence"

Bourdieu (Cushion 2006: 145) has observed that when holders of certain capitals use them to triumph over agents that have less and thereby change their actions, symbolic violence was being exercised. Different capitals were caught up in implicit systems of hierarchy that allowed domination and power to be exerted.

According to Covalleskie (1993: 37), this kind of power was diffuse in its operation: it was invisible and all-pervasive, and as such became difficult to resist as it embedded itself within the very relations through which people (and learners) navigated within their worlds (and that of the school). In school situations it was often the *disciplinary mechanisms* and access to power within them that provided the means by which power could be achieved.

At Avondale High, those in positions of authority (management, educators, and prefects) were also those that possessed certain kinds of capital that they used to great effect and which became their crucial source of power. Furthermore, not only did this allow them to exert symbolic violence on learners, but it also served to legitimate structures of discipline and punishment at the school.

What was striking about the learner interviews was that all learners - even those that admitted to having disciplinary records at the school and not enjoying their time there - were unequivocal about their desire to succeed at Avondale High and - eventually - in the workplace, and by implication, in life.

Fawwas noted that he did not want to always be seen as troublesome:

I don't want to break the rules on purpose, I don't want to get a bad name, but I am myself. What I have realised is that it goes into a book: when you go to another school, when you go to 'varsity that file goes with you. So they'll go, "Oh, look at this guy's Detention file!" and then they'll say this, that and the other. And all I'll hear is, "We'll get back to you on your application..." Yes, the discipline does make me, because it makes where I'm going. (Interview 1: 5)

Steven (probably the learner with the reputation of being the 'most troublesome' of all interviewees) similarly observed that he would eventually have to succumb to discipline if he was going to succeed:

I think that, in the future, the strict rules we have here at Avondale High won't be to your disadvantage; they'll mostly help you. They'll help you with your self-discipline; you'll be well-mannered, not being rowdy or out of line when you are doing your job on day. What you learn here about the rules will help you a lot for later in life. Discipline will never go away; it will always be with you. (Interview 9: 5)

Even Anurah, who typified defiance, said she found meaning in the rules that she so openly despised:

I think the rules here will make it better for you if you have a job one day. I will know how to abide by the rules in the work place, because I won't have trouble with pinning my hair back and stuff, because I had to do it for so long. There will be rules in the workplace, maybe not as strict as here at our school, but some of them will apply, like the dress code. I think I will be quite happy with rules when I work one day, because I will be used to rules. (Interview 10: 5)

Kevin asserted that it was issues of discipline that had brought him to Avondale High and that his parents had hoped sending him there would improve his future prospects:

The reason why I came here was because in primary school I was *always* in trouble. Then my parents looked for a high school. On the Internet, they looked up and saw that Avondale High is strict with discipline and here the children become wiser, so my mom sent me here.

Since then, I haven't been in a fight at this school; but I have thrown eggs and done some other stuff... I've learnt how to behave better and I haven't been in big trouble for how long now. I have learnt a lot here; I know that if you want a teacher to be nice and to respect you, you must be the same way to them.

I'm proud of myself and my marks are going up by far, because I'm not spending all my time in detention. I've not failed at subject for a long time.

But next year will be even better, I think, Ma'am. Working with the rules and not against them is better and I feel proud and my parents are also. (Interview 11: 6).

What the learners above did not realise, however, was that Avondale High was a *disciplinary* society, not only a *disciplined* one. Avondale High managed to influence the thinking of learners in ways that they often had little control over, and this was mainly done through order and restraint, as opposed to direct and coercive control. Covaleskie (1993: 83) noted that:

We are shaped through the coercion of disciplinary power, but unaware of the shaping. This is the importance of its lightness and its speed: we are deprived of the opportunity for resistance, and once effectively shaped; we have no desire to revolt.

Having said that, it was through their subjective practices, actions, and inclinations that learners opened up disjuncture within the school system and its different mechanisms of social reproduction.

5.4 Conclusion

In this project, the interviewed learners at Avondale High were asked about their views on discipline, and they 'spoke back' in quite direct and subversive ways. Learners displayed views that were resonant of those held by John Dewey, who described discipline as a *relationship* between "us and the world as we pursue our aims" (as cited in Covaleskie 1993: 41 - 42), and those of Noddings, who stressed the importance of having a *worthwhile ethical ideal* to which we aspire (Covaleskie 1993).

In the project, the engagement by learners with not only the disciplinary aspects of their procedural and situational confines, but also their interactions with those in relationships of power served to emphasise the degree to which the complexity of the term 'discipline' and

the so-called ‘discipline problem at schools’ is under-theorised in South African education. The key conclusion of this thesis is that it is this under-theorisation and shallowness that has largely led to the failure of current strategies to establish ‘order’ and ‘optimal learning’ in schools, as goals identified by and aspired to by the Department of Education.

CHAPTER 6

‘DISCIPLINE’ REVISITED

Somewhere between Freire and Foucault, we hope, critique, question, and act.

(Yang 2009: 60)

6.1 *Introduction*

Paul Willis (2005: 462) has pointed out that:

Schools are one of the principal sites for the dialectical playing out of the apparent disjunctions and contradictions in changing societies that, while mostly misunderstood, underlie some of the most urgent education debates.

In grounding my study within the site and voices of youth of Avondale High School, I sought in this thesis to position a counter-narrative to the various studies and discussions on what is perceived to be the ‘serious discipline problem’ within education in South Africa. I have shown that ‘discipline’ needs to be thought of as more than punishment, or structures of ordering, in schools and should include understanding ‘discipline’ as a practice that has emancipatory and transformative possibilities. As Yang (2009: 49) notes, effective discipline is a rigorous act that necessarily includes a physical “practice of will”. Yang (2009: 59) asserts that:

Schools must have strong discipline policies, but the exact form that this takes is of little importance. What matters is whether the school commits to a policy of inclusion over a policy of punishment, and how this plays out in everyday practice. Schools should not invest in a great discipline *policy*, but rather in genuine discipline *praxis*.

For the above to be possible however, the voices and views of youth in schools have to be taken account of, and meaningful relationships have to be developed within schools that recognise the limits of what disciplinary mechanisms can achieve.

6.2 *Looking forward, acting back*

In the study, while listening and engaging with learner narratives, I found that the learners offered surprisingly insightful and meaningful views about how discipline operated, and took form and meaning, at the school where the research was conducted. I deliberately note my surprise here because both as an educator and a researcher I had a particularly subjective view when I started the study of what learners could probably contribute to the subject. By the end of the project I had developed a liberating and healthy respect for the thinking and rationalisations of youth at our school, which has changed both my approach to the issue of discipline and my own practice in the classroom.

The learners in the project provided sharp and decisive critiques of how discipline is practiced and understood at school, and often turned many of my questions on their head to offer a completely different analytical perspective. It is most ironic that it was this - the learners' standpoints and talking back - that made (for me) the important connections to what was being noted in the literature and other writings on the issue and nature of discipline. It was they who grasped what 'discipline' meant in the Avondale High context, and it was they that steered me to looking more carefully at what I was examining.

In this conclusion to my thesis I utilise a poem by a South African academic and poet, Kelwyn Sole (Kozain 2006), to metaphorically tie together the various parts of my argument. I do so because as an English subject educator with more than 20 years of experience I have found that the use of a poem or other forms of literature has often helped me to make sense and best express my ideas and views.

Sole, in his poem *Housing Targets*, succinctly captured for me the various dialectical and reciprocal metaphors implicated in the concept of 'discipline'. I provide a few lines below:

Somewhere in our past
we believed in the future

That a better world
would discover foundation
under our feet, and we
would be forever singing...

Bricks pile up in a field.
How they fit together
is anyone's guess.

As for now, the doorknobs
have no doors...

A key question for Sole was how past societies believed in a better future. Thus I asked myself how societies reproduced themselves, and on what did they build their futures? What sorts of structures in society were used to uphold order and what provided the meaning for how society saw itself developing and growing? How did different societies ensure that their form and content reflected the conditions of social organisation that they were looking for?

In this regard, I questioned in Chapter 4 how schools and education systems achieved and maintained acceptable levels of social order, what conditions were thought necessary for people to work together, and what mechanisms and conceptualisations were needed for schools to function.

I used Durkheim's views to argue that discipline was an important part of social reproduction and the development of systems that would allow society to progress and grow. Discipline and punishment were therefore embedded within the ways in which people lived and represented and regenerated core societal values on a daily basis. For Durkheim "the morality of each people is directly related to the social structure of the people practising it" (cited in Garland 1990: 24) and that it was in pursuit of social solidarity and cohesion that a future world was imagined.

Durkheim (cited in Garland 1990: 56) argued that it was through the development of a *common conscience* founded on foundational values such as freedom, reason, respect for the individual, and tolerance that futures were constructed. This common conscience worked through structures of discipline that kept a form of 'moral circuitry in motion' and kept the psyches of individuals in close unison with the morality of the society in which they lived, leading to social cohesion (Garland 1990: 34). For me the concept of discipline in the thesis was caught up in the ideas and conceptualisations on which societies were based. I wondered in the study how these ideas gained legitimacy in different communities and amongst different learners.

6.3 A world with foundations

In the second stanza of his poem Sole goes on to speak about how "a better world would discover *foundation* under our feet". I found this line quite paradoxical, since for a better world to emerge it assumed that a foundation would be created for it. On the other hand, all societies putting foundations in place needed to have some idea of what that "better world" was that they were striving for.

Michel Foucault is very useful here in understanding how discipline was not simply about disciplining individuals, but about 'producing' them in accordance with notions of rationality, efficiency, and humanitarianism for a new future society. Punishment and discipline thus play an important foundational role in producing the "rituals and the truths" around which people organise their lives and themselves (Garland 1990: 137). It is these "rituals and truths" that

form part of how societies not only imagine their futures but ensure that every process and body in society is correctly and properly organised and used for societal progress.

Foucault (1977:19) speaks in this regard about disciplinary knowledge that is valorised in the governance of their conduct in its very “depths and details” as it shapes the ways individuals conduct themselves. When individuals make sense of themselves by referring to various bodies of knowledge, argues Foucault (1977: 93), they become the subjects of disciplinary knowledge. In the study Adrian illustrates the above contention in his musings on his personal interactions with rules at Avondale:

Despite the fact that the rules don't affect me much, they do contain valuable pointers for life. These rules are but a fraction of the laws that we will be confronted with once we leave school. But actually, the rules *do* affect me, because I choose to learn from them. I choose to accept that they are there for a reason and I use them to my advantage. I have chosen to obey, but my obedience does not necessarily mean my acceptance – I keep my rebellious nature in check. At the moment, I might be considered a ‘*model citizen*’, but in this place I still find the rules...stifling. When I grow older, I might question but I still won't want to waste my time dealing with the repercussions.

I have made a choice: it's intellectual; it's cognitive. I have a special relationship with the rules and I'm OK with them, but only because that's how I've chosen to be. (Interview 7:5).

Happiness and peaceful interaction thus reigns when good decision-making occurs. And for the learners, finding structure - or foundations - in a world that is *apparently* haphazard and without organisation contributes unequivocally to them making sense thereof.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 87) how different learners make sense about education (and discipline) involves how individual capitals, social class, and everyday social factors intersect in their lives. Using the concepts of field, habitus and capital Bourdieu offers a theoretical conceptualisation that draws close parallels between economic and cultural issues in the lives of learners and the ways they think about their lives, and also points to the importance of understanding an individual's life events “in direct relation to the social context in which the action occurs” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

In his work, Bourdieu (2004) shows how individuals translate practices and experiences of their economic capital and social class background into embodied dispositions and capacities over time, which in effect means that different learners negotiate different social spaces and schools differently.

6.4 *How the bricks fit together: anyone's guess*

The third stanza of Sole's poem suggests that the patterns or sequences of how individuals engage with life has no specific blueprint and that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to social development. What holds their lives in place and according to a particular ordering lies in the ways in which power is wielded and infused into the lives of humans and organisations. According to Foucault, power works best through the freedom and individuality of people, and that in an uneven field of regulated possibilities it is the ways in which educators and learners play their respective roles in the operation of power that gives meaning to disciplinary practices.

In the thesis above I have argued that in participating in what Bourdieu (1986) refers to as the "game", they develop particular "strategies" within the field of educational engagements at the school, and utilise different forms of capital and understandings of their habitus to navigate their experiences. As part of this process and strategy learners in the thesis often inverted forms of power. Participants for example spoke freely of how educators and even the deputy principal were manipulated simply for their entertainment, amusement, and individual navigations. In this regard, Esihle explained:

I think kids are naughty for attention, but sometimes I also think it's not only that. It also maybe is just to be part of the group. They also sometimes just want to see people's reaction to what you did: it's like...prodding the teacher and saying, "This is what I'm doing. What are you doing about it?" Personally, I think everybody has a bit of 'naughtiness' underneath that 'goody-goody' impression. (Interview 6: 3)

The youth at Avondale subconsciously knew that, in the words of Malcolm X, "the examined life is painful" (motionlmags.tumblr.com/post/3715146543); yet they were not overly careful or apprehensive about discussing or disclosing their disciplinary encounters at the school. They always seemed to be unafraid and undaunted by challenges presented to them by the disciplinary mechanisms at the school, despite the difficulties that would arise:

Fawwas states this unambiguously:

I think I obey most of the time. I will never try to pretend that I'm not wrong; I won't lie. But if I'm right, even if I know I will get into trouble, if I know I'm right, there's no two ways for me. There are learners like me who say, "I'm gonna be me, I'm no-one else. I'm not gonna pretend to be someone else, I'm me. (Interview 1: 4)

In such a scenario it needs to be noted that the 'reformatory-like' or the 'factory-like' model of 'discipline' will need to be abandoned if the needs of learners like Fawwas are to be accommodated, and new paths of learning (as apprenticeship) with problem-posing approaches to 'discipline' as active, inclusionary and interpersonal relationships forged.

Foucault (1977) asserts in this regard that even if the focus of discipline were simply about classroom management, as is nowadays claimed to be the case, subtle forms of power and control would continue to be exerted. He argues that dominance-free discipline is impossible in schools where bureaucratic and regulated institutional forms remain as pervasive as is currently the situation.

6.5 *Doorknobs without doors*

Doorknobs (as referred to in line 10 of Sole's poem) may be regarded as small and insignificant but they have crucial functions, and no door can be opened without them. In the same way, to engage with the concept of 'discipline' the researcher needed 'doorknobs' by which to open the various 'doors' related to the project. These included meaningful theoretical perspectives that intersected with the vibrant and powerful views of the project participants. In this, the youth *were* essential contributors and participants in the theorisation of discipline, as were their explanations of their lived experiences - even worlds.

In a currently shifting world of post-modernity, youth unequivocally engage with (often through a physical *acting back* upon) structures hitherto seen as Molochs of power and discipline. Not only do they dialogue, as shown throughout this thesis, but also re-constitute normative categories that are meant to shape their thinking and lives. The fact that 13 Grade 9-learners at a local high school could act out their individual agency and make meaning of underlying structures of order at Avondale High in quite complex ways, surely reveals that 'discipline' as a concept with multiple meanings needs to be better understood and analysed.

What the thesis further shows is that without 'doors', 'doorknobs' have no purpose and thus theories and conceptualisations of discipline have no meaning if the 'doors' themselves (youth) are not acknowledged. I argue in the thesis that the negation of *discipline* as an inter-personal *relationship* contributes in no small way to the present problematic disciplinary experiences in schools.

6.6 *Conclusion*

Teaching, and research, is an ontological process; it is a *becoming*. As such, the critical difference between failure and success in education and educational research - and particularly in the case of learners' disciplinary encounters like those at Avondale High School - lies in the ability to steer clear of the *mechanization* of our work and to immerse ourselves in the *humanization* thereof.

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ADDENDUM A

Navrae
 Enquiries **Dr A.T Wyngaard**
IMibuzo
 Telefoon
 Telephone 021 467 9272
IFoni
 Faks
 Fax (021) 425-7445
IFeksi

Verwysing
 Reference 20100831-0052
ISalathiso



Ms CarinCarstens
 11 Nutans Road
 Durbanville
 7550

Dear Ms Carin Carstens

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE AT A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 September 2010 till 30 September 2010**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
 Western Cape Education Department
 Private Bag X9114
 CAPE TOWN
 8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard
 for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 31August 2010

ADDENDUM B



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

26 November 2010

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Ms C Carstens
Department of Educational Policy Studies
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7602

Reference: 460/2010

Ms C Carstens

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Youth culture and discipline at a school in the Western Cape*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.
4. The researcher/s implements the suggestions made by the mentioned by the Research Ethics Committee (Human Research) in order to reduce any ethical risks which may arise during the research.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards



MR SF ENGELBRECHT

Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health)



ADDENDUM C



HEADMASTER
Mr B MARCHAND
B.Comm., B.Ed.

FAIRBAIRN COLLEGE

HUGO STREET, GOODWOOD 7460

TELEPHONE 021 591-7117
FAX 021 591-0107
E-mail: admin@fairbairncollege.com
Website: www.fairbairncollege.com

12 August 2010

Dear Ms Carstens

I am glad to inform you, on behalf of the Governing Body, that permission has been granted for you to do the data collection and research for your half-thesis (through the University of Stellenbosch) at our school.

I wish to remind you of the WCED requirement that our school remain anonymous in all published parts of your research.

We wish you well in this endeavor.

Yours faithfully

B. Marchand

HEADMASTER



ADDENDUM D

27//10/2010: CONSENT – GUARDIANS (Questionnaire)

UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
 CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMED CONSENT – QUESTIONNAIRE
GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS

TITLE: YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE AT A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN
 CAPE

ETHICAL CLEARANCE: DESCRIPTION OF MY STUDY

Student: C. CARSTENS
 Organization: UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
 Study Leader: DR A. BADROODIEN
 Title: YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE AT A SCHOOL
 IN THE WESTERN CAPE

INFORMATION

I am Ms C. Carstens, an educator at the school and a part-time student at the University Of Stellenbosch. I am currently completing a Master's degree and in the process of writing a thesis on youth culture and discipline at a school in the Western Cape.

In the study, I seek to understand the relationship between youth, youth culture and perceptions of school discipline as expressed by the participant learners.

My concern is with the exploration of youth formations and understandings in relation to discipline issues at the school. I suggest that rule making has become part of identity-forming practices of the youth at school, and that how they understand "transgression" is grounded in their behaviour and in the youth culture of the school.

I will capture the views of Grade 9-learners via a questionnaire.

INFORMED CONSENT: GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS

For the purpose of my study, I will request permission from the guardians/parents of Grade 9-learners to take part in a questionnaire.

This will involve learners in two Grade 9-classes completing a questionnaire in writing on a chosen date and at a time assigned by the school. None of the questions will be insensitive or damaging in any way. The questions will simply explore the views and notions of the learners regarding discipline in general and at the school.

The purpose of requesting informed consent of you, the guardian/parent, is to secure the participation of your child in the process; to enable the use of data that emerges from the

questionnaire process; and to include this in the analysis thereof. The main purpose, however, is to ensure that the participation and contributions of the learners are not abused in any way.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obverse risks, as the questions are of a general nature. I would like to include your child, as he/she is a member of a randomly selected class.

The questionnaire will involve:

1. an educator handing out the questionnaire during a time chosen by the school;
2. your child completing the questionnaire, which will take about 15 – 20 minutes.

PROCEDURE

1. As your child is a minor, I need to request your consent, as the guardian/parent.
2. I declare that both you and your child will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm.
3. All information I glean from the questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The name of neither the school nor your child will be used or inferred in any way or form in the study.
4. Your child may choose not to take part.
5. Your child may choose to withdraw from filling in the questionnaire at any point whatsoever.
6. You may contact any one or all of the following, should you require further information about the research, or if I wish to make a complaint relating to my/my child's involvement in the research:
 - Ms Carin Carstens, the researcher, at 021 976 1387 (082 371 4565);
 - the promoter/supervisor, Dr A. Badroodien (University of Stellenbosch; azeem@sun.ac.za or 021-808 2263);
 - Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development.

REIMBURSEMENT

No benefits or incentives will be provided to any party partaking in this research.

CONSENT

1. I have read the "Participant Information Sheet" and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained. I understand and agree to give my consent/ take part.
2. I understand the purpose of the research project and my/my child's involvement in it, including potential harms and/or benefits.
3. I understand that I/my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage whatsoever, should I/my child wish to do so.
4. I understand that data will be collected and stored in a safe place.
5. I understand that no incentive(s) will be provided.

6. I understand that I may contact any one or all of the following, should I require further information about the research, or if I wish to make a complaint relating to my/my child's involvement in the research:
 - Ms Carin Carstens, the researcher, at 021 976 1387 (082 371 4565);
 - the promoter/supervisor, Dr A. Badroodien (University of Stellenbosch; azeem@sun.ac.za or 021-808 2263);
 - Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development.
7. I understand that my signature and that of my child (here below) will indicate my consent that he/she volunteer as a participant; that our questions have been answered satisfactorily; and that the information above is understood.
8. A copy of this form will be provided to you.
9. Your signature below means that you freely consent that your child participates in the research project.

INFORMED CONSENT SLIP

I agree that my child participate in filling in the questionnaire. I understand the purpose of the study and have been informed of all implications and procedures.

NAME OF GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE:

NAME OF CHILD: (Grade 9.....)

SIGNATURE:

C. Carstens:
(Researcher)

27/010/2010: CONSENT – GUARDIANS (Semi-Structured Interviews)

UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMED CONSENT – SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS

**TITLE: YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE AT A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN
CAPE**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE: DESCRIPTION OF MY STUDY

Student: C. CARSTENS
Organization: UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH
Study Leader: DR A. BADROODIEN
Title: YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE AT A SCHOOL
IN THE WESTERN CAPE

INFORMATION

I am currently completing a thesis on youth culture and discipline at a school in the Western Cape in fulfilment of the requirements of a Master's degree in Education.

In my study, I seek to explore the relationship between youth, youth culture and perceptions of school discipline as expressed by participant learners.

My concern is with the youth's understandings of discipline issues in general and at the school. I suggest that rule making has become part of identity-forming practices of the youth at school; and that how they understand "transgression" is grounded in their behaviour and in the youth culture of the school.

I seek to capture the views of Grade 9-learners via semi-structured interviews.

INFORMED CONSENT: GUARDIANS/PARENTS OF LEARNERS

For the purpose of my study, I will request permission from the guardians/parents of Grade 9-learners to volunteer to take part in semi-structured interviews.

This will involve learners that have filled out a questionnaire. On the basis of answers rendered, 14 learners will be asked to voluntarily take part in semi-structured interviews. None of the questions will be insensitive or damaging in any way. The questions will simply explore the views and notions of the learners as to discipline in general and at the school.

The purpose of requesting informed consent of the guardians/parents is to secure the participation of their children in the process, to enable the use of data that emerges from the questionnaire process, and to include this in the analysis thereof. The main purpose, however, is to ensure that the participation and contributions of the learners are not abused in any way.

RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obverse risks, as the questions are of a general nature. I would like to include your child, as he/she is a member of a randomly selected class.

The semi-structured interview will involve:

1. a one-on-one session, involving me and your child. The interview will take place at school, in a safe and accessible venue, during a time that is convenient for all parties involved;
2. your child will answer questions of a general nature and I envisage that no interview will be longer than 30 minutes.

PROCEDURE

1. As your child is a minor, I need to request your consent, as the guardian/parent.
2. I declare that both you and your child will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm.
3. All information I glean from the semi-structured interview will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
4. Neither the name of the school nor your child will be used or inferred in any way or form in the study.
5. Your child will be allocated a pseudonym, so that no information or opinion can be recognisable.
6. The interview will be taped, but no one will be identified by name. All transcripts will be verified.
7. Nobody else will have access to records.
8. All documentation will be kept in a safe place; until it is destroyed upon completion of my thesis.
9. Your child may choose not to take part.
10. Your child may choose to withdraw from participating in the semi-structured interview at any point whatsoever.

BENEFITS/REIMBURSEMENTS

No benefits or incentives will be provided to any party partaking in this research.

CONSENT

1. I have read the "Participant Information Sheet" and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained. I understand and agree to give my consent/ take part.
2. I understand the purpose of the research project and my/my child's involvement in it, including potential harms and/or benefits.
3. I understand that I/my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage whatsoever, should I/my child wish to do so.
4. I understand that the interview will be audiotaped and that data will be collected and stored in a safe place.
5. I understand that no incentive(s) will be provided.
6. I understand that I may contact any one or all of the following, should I require further information about the research, or if I wish to make a complaint relating to my/my child's involvement in the research:
 - Ms Carin Carstens, the researcher, at 021 976 1387 (082 371 4565);

- the promoter/supervisor, Dr A. Badroodien (University of Stellenbosch; azeem@sun.ac.za or 021-808 2263);
 - Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development.
7. I understand that my signature and that of my child (here below) will indicate my consent that he/she volunteer as a participant; that our questions have been answered satisfactorily; and that the information above is understood.
 8. A copy of this form will be provided to you.
 9. Your signature below means that you freely consent that your child participates in the research project.

INFORMED CONSENT SLIP

I agree that my child participate in the semi-structured interview. I understand the purpose of the study and have been informed of all implications and procedures.

NAME OF GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE:

NAME OF CHILD: (Grade 9.....)
(PARTICIPANT)

SIGNATURE:

C. Carstens:
(Researcher)

ADDENDUM E

16/09/2010: Assent Form

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

YOUTH CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE
AT A SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN CAPE

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms Carin Carstens (B.A.Ed.(Hons.), B.Ed.) from the Department of Education at Stellenbosch University. The results of research will contribute to my dissertation. You have been selected as a participant in this study because your opinions and insights will form the basis of my research on youthful learners and how they see discipline in the school environment.

1. PURPOSE OF MY STUDY

I aim to find out how young people (like you) think about school discipline. I want to know how your understanding of school discipline and its structures helps you to find your own place at school.

2. PROCEDURES

Two Grade 9-classes will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire. This will take you about 10 minutes, as it is very important to collect general insights from you all.

On the basis of this questionnaire, I will select 14 learners and ask you if you will be willing to have a “one-on-one” chat to me at a later stage, for about 30 – 45 minutes. (Rules ensure that I will first have to ask your parents or guardians for permission to interview you.)

These interviews will be at school and at your convenience, as your opinions will form a vital part of my whole dissertation (which is like a 100-page essay).

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

I do not foresee any difficulties or problems in this regard. The questions that I will ask should not make you uncomfortable at all and you may choose not to answer at any time. As I am not a teacher of yours, there are no risks of reprimand or penalty.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO YOU (OR TO SOCIETY)

You might learn – in an indirect way – to think a little more deeply about some things, and you might get to know me (and your own views) a little better. However, any benefits to you or the school or society in general will probably be indirect benefits only.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will NOT benefit directly. I will not pay you any money or buy any gifts, as there are rules that prevent me from doing so.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Our discussions will be taped, so that I can remember all you say, but our conversations will be PRIVATE. You will be able to choose a false name, so that you can never be identified. Afterwards, I will give you a typed report of our interview, so that you can verify its contents and sign it. Once the University has accepted my work, all tapes will be erased and hard copies destroyed.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be disclosed with your permission only, or as required by law. I promise to safeguard all information in password-protected programmes and software. All documentation will be kept in my safe at home and no one other than myself will have access. If I have to discuss our interview with my lecturer, I will use your false name as reference.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose if you want to be in this study or not. Even if you accept my invitation at first and later change your mind, you are allowed to withdraw at any time. I will understand, I promise. You may also refuse to answer any question you don't want to, and still remain in the study.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at 082-371-4565 or my lecturer, Dr Badroodien, at 021-808 2263.

9. YOUR RESEARCH RIGHTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and there will be no "come-backs" or grudges on my side. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development.



SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Ms C. Carstens described the information above to the participant in English and the participant is in command of this language. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his/her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to
..... and his legal representative. He/She was
encouraged and given ample time to ask me questions. The conversation was conducted in
English.

Signature of Researcher:

ADDENDUM F

07/09/2010

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MS CARSTENS
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH*****THE YOUTH AND DISCIPLINE AT OUR SCHOOL***

*

Please help me to collect information on your opinions regarding DISCIPLINE. I need to find out what you think, in order to help me write a dissertation (a 100-page essay) so that I can pass my Masters degree in Education.

All information and opinions will be treated as CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you!

* **NAME:**..... **CLASS: GR 9**

1. How do you understand the term "discipline"?

.....
.....

2. What are your views on the discipline at the school?

.....
.....

3. What kinds of disciplinary problems do you see at the school?

.....
.....

4. Name a few things that you regard as a problem of discipline.

.....
.....

5. When do you think it is okay to discipline learners?

.....
.....

6. How would you discipline the following learners?

6.1 Jolene, who has brought drugs onto the school grounds.

.....
.....

6.2 Garth, who has stolen your cell phone.

.....
.....

6.3 Jaime, who has shouted and sworn at your English teacher in front of the class.

.....

.....

6.4 Adrian, who has not done his homework OR his writing out for Mathematics.

.....

.....

7.1 Have you ever been disciplined at high school?

.....

7.2 (Tick the following, if applicable.) *At high school, I have been given*

7.2.1 suspension(s)

7.2.2 in-school-suspension(s)

7.2.3 Saturday D.T.(s)

7.2.4 Grade Head Detention(s)

7.2.5 Prefects' Detention(s)

7.2.6 Writing out

7.2.7 Any other form of punishment (describe):

.....

.....

7.3 Think of one incident. Do you think what you did justified being disciplined? (Please give a reason.)

.....

.....

.....

7.4 What would you have done in such a situation, if you were the educator and had to discipline the learner?

.....

.....

8. Why do you think learners transgress or misbehave?

.....

.....

.....

10. Do you think young people see discipline differently now-a-days? Please explain.

Thank you!

ADDENDUM G

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: RESEARCH FOR MS CARIN CARSTENS
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH**

*

THE YOUTH AND DISCIPLINE AT OUR SCHOOL

*

27/10/10

The answers to the questions I am going to ask you are for my private information. Remember, you will be given a false name under which I am going to record your opinions. After I have typed up our interview, you have to check it so that you can verify what you said.

You can choose if you want to answer, and you do not HAVE to answer all questions. If you decide not to answer, that's OK. If you decide to stop the interview, that's OK.

It's even OK if you decide at any stage that you do not want to take part in my study any more.

Are you ready?

For the purpose of this interview, do you want to choose your own false name? If so, under which pseudonym shall I record this interview?

1. What does the word "youth" mean to you?
2. What do you think is special or different about youth nowadays?
3. Tell me about things youth do in your area that make them different and unique.
4. What do you think is unique about yourself as a youth?
5. How do you define yourself and develop your own way of getting around at the school?
6. People always speak about naughty or disruptive kids. What do you identify as a naughty kid?
7. What would you need to do to be regarded as a "naughty" kid? Why do you think so?
8. Tell me about what you think about discipline at the school?
9. Who do you normally think of when you think about discipline in the school?
10. How do you think discipline is developed at the school?
11. How are you with the rules here at our school? Do you think others know you because of how you are with the rules here?
12. Do you think the rules have an influence on who you are? Why/ not?
13. Do you think the rules have a say over the kind of person one becomes here?
14. And how about yourself: how do you interact with the rules? Do they influence the person you are or will become?
15. Anything else you want to talk about in this regard?

Thank you!